ENTERTAINMENT / G1
PDI man in Hollywood: Angelina Jolie opens up for the first time

BUSINESS / B1
RP exporters to lose US duty-free access

NEWS / A2
Ramon Obusan, National Artist for Dance, dead at 68

SPORTS / A25
Asiad bronze medalist Bibat ousted from RP Amateur golf tilt

Local officials divided over people's initiative

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Edra L. Benedicto

DESPITE THE RENEWED PITCH OF PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo, Charter change has become such a prickly issue that even local government officials are at odds over it.

Carlo Fortaza, secretary general of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (Ulap),

LOCAL OFFICIALS A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Friday, December 22, 2006 ★★ 11 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 14 P18 www.inquirer.net

A series of unfortunate incidents at int'l airports

LOS ANGELES—"If a baby can get through, what the hell else can get through?"

This was the reaction of Brian Sullivan, a retired Federal Aviation Administration security

A SERIES A6

4-day holiday truce OKd

HOUSE OF LIGHTS
Every year, the home on Policarpio Street is the first to light up, as it did on Nov. 21, when this photo was taken. Jimmy and Norma Lim, owners of the now-famous house in Mandaluyong, bring the joy of Christmas to countless families who come from all over just to watch the lights fantastic.

JAY DAVID PONCIANO

AFP to halt offensives vs Reds but not vs Abus

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo yesterday approved a unilateral suspension of offensive military operations against the communist New People's Army for four days during the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Ms Arroyo approved Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr.'s recommendation to suspend military offensives on Dec. 24-25 and Dec. 31-Jan. 1.

Esperon announced the approval after emerging from an hourlong conference with the President and the military top brass in Camp Aguinaldo.

Ms Arroyo, who has been the acting defense secretary since her former chief legal counsel, Avelino Cruz, resigned from the post on Nov. 30, attended simple ceremonies marking the AFP's 71st founding anniversary.

"We are announcing the President's approval (of) the unilateral suspension of offensive military operations," Esperon said. "This has nothing to do with any peace talks. It is simply a Yuletide gesture."

Last year, Malacañang declared a similar four-day unilateral truce against the guerrillas.

The Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New Peo-

4-DAY HOLIDAY A2

Isafp holds lavish Christmas bash with 'Emperor'

By Fe Zamora

AMID SHOUTS OF "LONG LIVE THE EMperor," Armed Forces intelligence chief Brig. Gen. Delfin Bangit threw P500 bills, like they were candy, at the body Christmas party held on Wednesday night.

Easily the grandest party in Camp Aguinaldo this season, the Christmas bash of the Intelligence Service of the AFP turned the highly secured compound into a rock concert-cum-Oktoberfest-cum-moonlane TV show, complete with stand-up comics from popular bars on Timog and Quezon Avenue.

One insider told the Inquirer that "it was the most lavish" Christmas party ever celebrated at the body headquarters.

AFP information officer Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro declined to comment on the body party. "I don't really know what transpired during the party," he told the Inquirer yesterday.

An Isafp employee defended Bangit. "He gave gifts in the spirit of Christmas. Besides, most of the raffle prizes were solicited," the employee said on condition that her name would not be published.

An Isafp operative said the party was intended to boost the morale of Isafp. Which is probably why music from three live bands could be heard on the side streets outside the compound. They performed "Tito Sen and today's Pinoy rap.

"It's on: all you can...drink all you can," an Inquirer source said.

The sumptuous fare included six roasted calves and an assortment of delicacies spread out on U-shaped buffet tables, the

ISAFP A10

Humane treatment of elderly urged

By Maria Cangco S. Gonzaga
Contributor

"ELDER ABUSE" REFERS TO AN INTENtional negligent act by a caregiver that causes harm to a vulnerable adult.

The abuse may take the form of physical, emotional or sexual exploitation, or abandonment.

Dr. Emmanuel Gochuico Sr., founder and head of the St. Luke's Geriatric Center, says that while elder abuse is not prevalent in the Philippines, it exists in both low-income and well-achieved families.

The telltale signs of elder abuse are pressure marks on the body, broken bones, depression, unexplained withdrawal from normal activities, untreated medical needs, or strained, tense relationships.

According to geriatric studies, caregivers engage in elder abuse when they are tired. They angrily express their fatigue, threat, or make threats.

Children of affluent families may resolve unexplained legal issues, especially documents.

Some may leave their parents in institutions or hospitals on a long-term basis, which, Gochuico says, is tantamount to abandonment.

"Elders are not exactly happy to be re-settled. They want to remain in their house because intimacy among family members is important to them as they age. And they need to be constantly reas-

HUMANE A8

CONTROVERSIAL SHOW
Spectators watch keenly as a sea lion balances an umbrella on her snout during a marine entertainment show at SM Mall of Asia. Outside, environmentalists and animal welfare activists picketed, urging the government to stop such shows which they said are inhumane. (Story in Metro, Page A21)

Laoag radioman stabbed dead

By Cristina Arzadon
Inquirer Northern Luzon

LAOAG CITY—RADIO REPORTER Andres "Andy" Acosta had just left a Christmas party of media colleagues at a hotel here at 10 p.m. Wednesday when he was stabbed in the belly on his way home.

Acosta, 46, a reporter of dxJC Aksyon Radyo, managed to drive himself on his motorcycle to the Mariano Marcos Memorial Hospital but passed out on reaching its gate.

He was pronounced dead before midnight—the 12th media personality to be killed this year in the Philippines, described as the most dangerous place for journalists after war-torn Iraq, and the 40th since Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo became President in 2001.

In a statement, the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines condemned the attack and urged the Arroyo government to end the "culture of impunity" that has allowed the killings to continue.

Only two of the cases have been resolved with the conviction on Nov. 28, 2005, of the accused in the murder of Edgar Damalerio nine months earlier and on Oct. 6

LAOAG A6

Muslim celebration starts Dec. 25

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE TWO-STORY HOUSE, A stone's throw from the Blue Mosque in a Muslim enclave in Taguig City, gleams with white and green lights bought from a popular shopping mall in nearby Makati.

The modern passersby would think it was another Christian household caught in the Yuletide spirit in this predominantly Catholic country.

But its owner, Muslim scholar Taha Basman, did not decorate his home in Bahayhika Village to welcome Jesus Christ. His own Islamic faith tells him that Christ is but one of many prophets mentioned in the Koran.

Basman, 54, and the rest of the Muslim world eagerly await Dec. 25 to celebrate Eid al-Adha, which marks the end of the pilgrimage (hajj) of Muslims who have made it to the holy city of Mecca.

Also to be commemorated on

MUSLIM A10

Virgin ma awaits arrival of offspring

CHESTER, ENGLAND—AS CHRISTMAS approaches, a virgin mother is anxiously awaiting the arrival of her offspring. She's Flora, the Komodo dragon.

In an evolutionary twist, Flora has managed to become pregnant all on her own without any male help. It would seem the dating is sanguinous: The seven baby Komodo dragons are due this festive season.

"We were blown away when we realized what she'd done," said Kevin Buley, a reptile expert at Flora's home at the Chester Zoo in the town in northern England.

"But we certainly won't be naming any of the hatchlings Jesus," Buley said.

Other reptile species reproduce sexually in a process known as parthenogenesis. But Flora's virginal conception, and that of another Komodo dragon earlier this year at the London Zoo, are the first time the process has been documented in a Komodo dragon.

The reptiles, renowned for their intelligence, are native to Indonesia. They are the world's largest lizards and have no natural predators—making them on par with sharks and lions as the pinnacle of the animal kingdom.

The cases of Flora and the London lizard, Sungai, are described in a paper published on Thursday in Nature.

Parthenogenesis is a process in which eggs become embryos without male fer-

VIRGIN A10

FLORA, a Komodo dragon, is both an expectant "mother" and "father."

A10

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2006

WEATHER FORECAST

[FORECAST: Latest weather forecast]

Second **FRONTPAGE**

Is P4.7-B fund for polls? NGO asks

By Norman Bordadora and TJ Burgonio

A GROUP MONITORING HOW THE GOVERNMENT spends people's money warned of the possible misuse of a P4.7-billion allocation supposedly for a nationwide school feeding program, saying it might end up as government largesse in next year's elections.

The Freedom from Debt Coalition yesterday said the House of Representatives, dominated by President Macapagal-Arroyo's allies, insist on the multibillion-peso allocation for the School Feeding Program despite requests of implementation.

"The insistence of the House panel for the retention of the P4.7-billion allocation and the rice distribution component of the administration proposal (Operation) assures non-implementation in its implementation is highly suspect," said FDC president Ana Maria Bernardo.

One of the issues raised over the feeding program is the distribution of sub-standard imported rice to school children in exchange for their attendance in school.

"The lessons on the Guimaras Mangosteng And rice program in 2000 should not escape each and every Filipino at this early point," she added.

The Department of Agriculture's Bantu (agricultural) program was allegedly the source of the P728-million fertilizer scam after the DA allegedly disbursed funds even for non-agricultural areas such as Quezon City.

The funds were allegedly used to fund the administration's campaign kitty for the election of Mr. Arroyo.

"While the legislators seek to channel these here with claims that this program is well-suited by many poor families, FDC and the Youth Against the Debt believes that this is precisely patronage politics at work," Bernardo said.

As in other government programs in 2004 that allegedly benefited the poor before the elections, FDC said it believes the feeding program will also serve as a tool for the administration to buy votes.

"This manifests how the poor become easy prey for political ends. The problem of deepening and widespread poverty should be addressed squarely through a serious poverty reduction program no strings attached or without the names of politicians inscribed in the packaging of relief items," Bernardo said.

The FDC made the statement in the wake of pronouncements made by House opposition members, including Majority Floor Leader Rep. Jose Solis that the passage of the proposed P1.126 trillion national budget for 2007 will not be achieved before yuletide because of the Senate and House disagreement on the feeding program.

"The FDC, together with the YAD, believes that the delay in the passage of the budget should be a cause for alarm to the Filipino taxpayers," Bernardo said.

"While FDC and YAD believe that malnutrition among school children should be addressed, and prioritized in government spending, the Senate is right to point that the government's current school feeding program is highly dubious in nature and impact," she added.

At the Senate, senators spent their last day approving a bill that declares unidentified checks of cheating in civil service examinations.

HIGHER? Commission Chair Sen. Franklin Drilon appears to be not amused with LTFRB Chair Thompson Lantion and Land Transportation Office (LTO) acting chief Reynaldo Berroya after a Senate hearing on the budget of the Department of Transportation and Communications.

Nat'l Artist for Dance Obusan; 68

OBUSAN

NATIONAL ARTIST FOR Dance Ramon Obusan died yesterday of cardio-pulmonary arrest at the Makati Medical Center in Makati City. He was 68.

Obusan founded in 1972 the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG), which earned distinction for its presentation of Filipino traditional dances.

Until his death, he was overseeing the ROFG's annual Christmas program "Bituin ti Pakse" at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Obusan was named national artist by President Macapagal-Arroyo on May 23. He was conferred the award on June 9 along with Bienvenido Lumbera (literature), Bernardo Cabrera (visual arts), Ildefonso Santos Jr. (architecture), Ronald Allan Post also Fernando Ilet Jr. (Philippines), Ramon Valera (fashion design, posthumous) and Abdulmari Imao (sculpture).

His remains will lie in state at his house in Pasay City.

In a statement issued last night, the President hailed Obusan as "a true cultural treasure" who "distinguished himself by preserving and promoting culture through dance."

"He and the [ROFG] generously extended his goodwill for our people and brought so much joy to audiences worldwide," Ms Arroyo said.

FILL 'ER UP. A gasoline station worker gets busy filling up cars as prices of gasoline went down by P2 per liter. The lower oyster effectively starts until Jan. 1. Officials hope that lower gas prices and a bit in legislate wage increases could ease the working man's burdens.

House passes on 3rd reading bill seeking P125 wage hike

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PASSED on third reading a bill that seeks to grant a P125-across-the-board wage increase for private sector workers before adjourning for the holidays late Wednesday.

Explosive militant lawmakers gathered around Zambonga del Norte Rep. Seadfier Barbaga, chair of the House committee on labor, at 8:30 p.m. as they thanked the House leadership, led by Speaker Jose de Venecia, for finally fulfilling its promise to give minimum wage earners the much-needed raise in their take home pay.

Partido ng Manggagawa Rep. Renato Magtubo, one of the principal authors of House Bill No. 245, hailed the passage as a significant advance in the fight for a legislated wage increase.

"A Christmas bonus won by workers through determined struggle against resistance by capitalists, state and reactionaries," said Magtubo, describing it as the "best thing" that the House of Representatives did before adjourning.

Barbaga told reporters that if enacted, HB 245 would grant an across the board pay hike to those in the private sector by the first year, P65 for the second year and P60 for the third and last year.

The Senate's version, authored by Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, seeks to grant a one-time P1,00 wage hike.

Asked whether President Macapagal-Arroyo would be inclined to sign the measure despite stiff opposition from big business, Barbaga said: "If we still can sign it (the final version) in 30 days, it will have sets law. I hope it happens."

Bayan Muna Rep. Teddy Casiño dubbed the passage of HB 245 as a "historic and major breakthrough."

He said the last time that Congress legislated a wage hike was in 1999 but before the present to increase wages was passed on to wage boards.

"We hope the Senate immediately passes its counterpart bill by January so our workers can enjoy the increase as the start of the year," said Casiño.

THERE'S no better time to display gas prices than when they're down. A gasoline station takes pride in its lower gas prices.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo arrives at the AFP Officer's Club for the celebration of the AFP's 71st anniversary. She is escorted by AFP chief Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, whom she thanked for his loyalty.

DOJ chief says public support for rallies down

By Christine O. Avendaño

PUBLIC support FOR DEMONstrations against the Arroyo administration was waning and this was seen in the low turnout at last week's anti-Charter change rallies in Metro Manila.

This was the assessment of the Cabinet security cluster as a meeting in Malacañang with President Macapagal-Arroyo last Wednesday, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said yesterday.

Gonzalez said that the Cabinet security cluster, which meets almost every week, sees to assess the political situation, particularly "the start up" to the anti-Charter change rallies and "looking beyond it."

He was referring to the anti-Charter change rallies that took place last week at Makati City and at the Luneta Park.

The rallies were called by groups led by the opposition, Catholic Church and civil society to protest the Palace-House campaign to amend the Constitution without the participation of the Senate. The campaign was briefly put on hold.

Gonzalez said the Cabinet security cluster assessment was that the outlook of the political situation in the country was "good."

"We believe these things (demonstrations) will be popping up and...will continue in the slightest provocation," he said in a phone interview.

Gonzalez said that protest activities still are setup, "especially as we approach the election fever."

"They (anti-Arroyo groups) are looking for issues to exaggerate...but the enthusiasm of the public (for demonstrations) is waning," the justice secretary added.

He said this was visible in the low turnout at rallies against Charter change in Makati City last Dec. 11 and the prayer rally called by the Catholic Bishop Conference of the Philippines last Dec. 17 at Luneta.

"If you look at it, it's the same people manning up and all of them basically are leftists," Gonzalez said.

He said he believed that public support for demonstrations was waning because people were tired.

UN to donate $2.6M for typhoon victims

By Miko Dizon
and Christian Esguerra

A $2.6 MILLION AID PACKAGE FOR VICTIMS of the typhoons that recently hit the Philippines has been approved by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said in a statement.

Aside from the aid package, a "Flash Appeal" was also launched by the OCHA and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Geneva to raise funds from the international community to help the Philippine government in rehabilitating communities that were ravaged by the typhoons, the DFA added.

The DFA said Enrique Manalo, Philippine Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, sent a report to the DFA home office reflecting it of the efforts of the UN in Geneva to help the typhoon victims.

"The impact of the typhoons was almost unprecedented in terms of severity and damage, and that the storms represent a significant setback in the long-term development prospects of the Bicol and other affected communities," Manalo told the group that attended the launch.

The specific projects identified by the Philippine government and the UN as part of the emergency and rehabilitation effort were also discussed.

The "Flash Appeal" has a "qualitative difference," focusing on the long-term approach that does not only address the immediate response to the needs of the victims but also long-term rehabilitation and "strengthening early warning capacity in order to plan the long-term development prospects of affected communities on a firm basis."

At the meeting, Manalo cited reports that said more than 7 million people had been displaced by the typhoons.

In Albay alone, nearly a thousand people were killed and hundreds of others are missing after the province was hit by Supertyphoon "Reming" early this month.

Aid continues to pour in for victims of the typhoons.

The United States Catholic Bishops Conference will donate $500,000 through its humanitarian arm, the Catholic Relief Services, according to the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

SEASON OF GIVING

The LRP Foundation, in coordination with Hapag-Asa and Metro Bakers (Dumlao Donuts), held its annual gift giving and feeding program for the Hapag-Asa Nutrition Program children of Purok 1 in Gusa, Cagayan de Oro. The gift giving tradition was held on Dec. 14, 2006 at the Our Lady of Peace Parish in Gusa, Cagayan de Oro. CHARLIE VILLANUEVA

Yule spirit alive amid devastation

LEGAZPI CITY—AMID CHRISTMAS (PARTIES) Christmas shopping and parties for back-breaking construction work this week as help thousands left destitute after the Bicol region.

The 19-year-old student nurse was one of hundreds of volunteers, from soldiers to businessmen, who passed buckets of water and building materials at a site for 600 new homes in Albay province, around 330 kilometers of Manila.

"It's really very difficult because I am not used to doing these things early morn do," Dimasuca told Reuters, wiping sweat from her face as she took a short break from carrying cement blocks in the baking heat.

"It's a rewarding and humbling experience. I couldn't believe I survived that huge typhoon of doing this. Of course, all of us were exhausted and tired after a day's work, but I can't explain the happiness of helping people I never even knew or see."

The Philippine government wants to build around 10,000 new homes for nearly 440,000 people displaced after a succession of typhoons crashed into the Philippines since September.

Hectorsanas said her families were calling on what will become Tanour village, a hilly area free of geological hazard so that will be a new home for families displaced after Typhoon Durian devastated their communities last month.

Supertyphoon Reming killed more than 1,000 people and left more than 300 missing after a series of mud and water crushing from Mount Mayon, the country's most active volcano, into small villages.

Around 120,000 people were still sheltering in evacuation centers or relatives after fleeing's wrath.

"Twenty-one days after the last powerful typhoon to hit our country, we must begin the massive reconstruction efforts to get the affected communities back on their feet," said Glenn Rabonza, executive director of the National

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
RURAL POWER PROJECT
CONSULTING SERVICES
(RP Grant No. TF052186)

The Government of the Philippines, through the Department of Energy (DOE) with grant assistance from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), is implementing the Rural Power Project (RPP). The RPP aims to support reforms and private investments to meet the needs of rural communities for adequate, affordable and reliable energy services.

Section 56 of the Republic Act No. 9136 otherwise known as the "**Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001**" or "**EPIRA**" and Rule 14 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations allow for the entry of other Qualified Third Parties (QTPs) to enable first call-not the mandatory provided with electric service by Transmission Distribution Utilities. The DOE has issued the mandatory policies and guidelines for QTP participation, while the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) has already promulgated the regulation rules for QTPs. To date, DOE has received two (2) detailed project proposals from pre-qualified entities that need endorsement to ERC for the issuance of QTP Authority to Operate.

The RPP seeks to undertake the subject Consultancy Services with the objectives of assisting DOE in the review and evaluation of technical and financial components of projects for the determination of reasonable Full Cost Recovery Rate and the Socially-Approved Retail Rate in accordance to the rules of EPIC, among others. The proposed consultancy services will be funded under the Rural Power Project, Grant No. TF052186-PH.

The DOE invites eligible individual Consultants, either local or international, to indicate their interest in providing the services. Each interested Consultant must provide information indicating that he/she is qualified to perform the services by submitting the following: (i) latest curriculum vitae; (ii) a brief write-up of his/her qualifications related to the assignment, including expertise in the technical and financial design of the privatized rural electric grid projects using diesel generation, mini-hydro, hybrid systems, etc.; and (iii) relevant experience in similar assignments and international jobs. The assignment's desired "**SHORT**" and, if selected, the Consultant must be immediately available for work as soon as possible.

The Consultant will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank's **Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers** published in January 1997 pursuant to September 1997, January 1999 and May 2002, International Terms may obtain further information from the address below during office hours (8:00 to 11:00 hours and submit their Expression of Interest on or before **8 January 2007** (up to 5:00 p.m.).

MYLENE C. CAPONPONCOL
Project Director, Rural Power Project
Electric Power Industry Management Bureau
Department of Energy
Energy Center, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Telephone Numbers (632) 7121 to 5487 local 112
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US group says Sulu-Sulawesi Sea priority for protection

By Veit Controvar

A WASHINGTON-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL group whose partners include some US corporations considers the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas as perhaps "the highest marine priority area on Earth."

Peter Seligmann, chair and CEO of Conservation International, gave this assessment as he welcomed the government's recent calls to protect the Verde Island Passage, a teeming marine ecosystem within the Philippine side of the Sulu-Sulawesi waters that are also shared by Malaysia and Indonesia.

He noted, though, that the donor community whom CI can tap for Verde now expects the Philippines to "deliver" on its initial plans.

Long-term strategy

He also said potential funders were looking for a long-term strategy for the sculpture-country wherein conservation could go hand in hand with job creation and the "extraction industries" do not tap natural resources dry.

"There has to be governance considerations. We have to be convinced that the solutions developed in the Philippines are going to work. Once you define that, I don't think there's going to be difficulty finding financial resources," said Seligmann, who met with local partners in Manila last month and personally saw Verde's treasures on a diving trip.

CI is a partner in a two-year-old, private sector initiative with power producer First Gen Corp. and the First Philippine Conservation Inc. to protect Verde from destructive practices and promote it for ecotourism.

He said CI had been telling donor companies that Sulu-Sulawesi was "one of the highest, if not the highest marine (conservation) priority area on Earth."

Among the philanthropists currently supporting the effort is the Pritzker family who owns the retail giant Hyatt, he said.

Nationally protected area

"So for the Philippines, it's now a matter of whether it can deliver," he said in an interview with the Inquirer.

President Macapagal-Arroyo last Nov. 8 issued an executive order declaring Verde passage, a sea lane between the provinces of Batangas and Mindoro, a national protected area.

The 180 some days after the release of a three-year biodiversity study by the World Conservation Union showing that Verde's waters host up to 1,736 overlapping marine species in a span of just over 110 kilometers.

"Sea named Verde the record of having the highest concentration of marine life in the world, according to the study titled "The Center of the Center of Marine Shorefish Biodiversity: The Philippine Islands."

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, December 22, 2006
3rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: 1 Sam 1:24-28
Gospel: Luke 1:46-56

And Mary said:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit exults in God my savior!

He has looked upon his servant in her lowliness, and people forever will call me blessed.

The Mighty One has done great things for me. Holy is His Name!

From age to age his mercy extends to those who live in his covenant.

He has acted with power and done wondrous deeds, and scattered the proud with their plans.

He has put down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up those who are downtrodden.

He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his friend Israel, his servant, for he remembered his mercy, even as he promised our fathers,

Abraham and his descendants forever."

Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months and then returned home.

Commentary

By long meeting our ancestors, Hannah brings Samuel and returns him to God as the gift was given, as she gives him back to the service of the Holy One of God. And Mary sings about the goodness of God to her and all the poor and those faithful to God's promises. *She prays Israel to have what God has done for them since the beginning and how the promises are coming true. And her son will scatter the proud, lift the lowly, feed the hungry, depose the mighty and send off the rich and selfish, empty-handed and clueless. The promises will come true. She is making her life on them. Are we making our lives and days on the promises of our God serving us?*

Verbum Publishing Inc., 8 Maginhawa St., 1810 Sikatuna Village, Quezon City, CP-PO Box 1, Diliman 1100 Quezon City, tel.: 433-0884 to 86; fax: 433-7600; e-mail: info@cbcp.org; Website: http://www.bible.org (Clarion Publishing Inc.) http://www.cbcp.org (Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines)

4-day holiday truce OKd

From page A1

(AFP) Army did not call a similar truce declaration, but said AFP fighters would currently be on "defensive mode" during the season.

The DPWH, for its part announced a truce for this year.

"Well, they can suspend, if they want [to] but as I said, it's a unilateral declaration of suspension of offensive military operations," Esperon said. Alternatively,

... aside from allowing the nation to celebrate Christmas in peace, such truce is also meant to give soldiers in the front lines some respite during the holidays.

Offensive vs Moro rebels

There will be no similar suspension of offensive military operations against extremist rebels in Sulu belonging to the Abu Sayyaf and the Jemaah Islamiyah.

The military did not recommend any suspension of hostilities to Sulu, saying they did not want to give the Moro rebels time to regroup.

Around 8,000 troops, mostly from elite forces, have been deployed to Sulu since August to pursue known leaders of the Abu Sayyaf and at least two Indonesians. If leaders believed to be behind the 2002 terrorist attack in Bali, Indonesia.

Mr Arroyo also approved yesterday Oplan Bantay Laya II, the military's new internal security master plan aimed at defeating the insurgency by 2010, administration ends. The new plan succeeds the five-year Oplan Bantay Laya that started in 2002.

"We are ready to submit to the Commander in Chief Oplan Bantay Laya II to defeat the CPP-NPA by 2010, destroy the ASG (Abu Sayyaf Group) and contain the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front)," Esperon said during the anniversary ceremonies.

FORMER President Fidel V. Ramos hands over one of the medals to President Macapagal-Arroyo for one of the soldier awardees at the AFP Officer's Club in Camp Aguinaldo during the celebration of the 71st Armed Forces of the Philippines founding anniversary. LYNDON CH

After the conference, he said the President had approved the master plan.

"So, 2010 is a new deadline for us to finish those communist terrorists," Esperon said.

Esperon said that in the five years that Oplan Bantay Laya I was in force, the armed strength of the NPA was brought down to 7,100 from 12,000.

He also claimed that the number of barangays "affected" by NPA influence has started to decline from a peak of 12,519 in December 2004 to 2,115 in the latest count.

This year, Esperon went on, a CPP-NPA regional executive was killed while 13 other guerrilla front secretaries were either killed or captured or have surrendered.

"If we cannot call that a success against the NPA, certainly we would like to call this a momentum, a lot of momentum," he said.

Police on full alert

Chief Supt. Samuel Pagdilao, spokesperson of the Philippine National Police, yesterday said it was maintaining its "full alert" level until after the holidays.

He said the red alert had not been lowered since it was changed earlier this month for the summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Summit in Cebu, which was postponed.

Pagdilao explained that the full alert was extended for the Church-led prayer rally in Luneta last week and would extends for the CPP founding anniversary on Dec. 26.

He said PNP Director General Oscar Calderon had reminded PNP personnel "to be vigilant, to adopt preemptive measures and avoid being the subject of NPA attacks."

A "full alert" means all policemen will have to stay at their posts at all times. All leaves are cancelled. With a report from Alexis Romero

Laoag radioman stabbed dead

From page A1

of Ilocos Manuel for the killing of Marlene Esperat on March 24, 2005.

Dalire have yet to establish whether Acosta's killing was work-related.

Acosta was the second Aksyon Radyo broadcaster to be killed since 2004 when commentator Roger Mantano was gunned down on his way home in Digos, Davao.

Mantano's killers, who have been identified as hired guns, are facing murder charges in a Quezon City court.

Not premeditated

SPO2 Marvin Parcon, Batac police's chief investigator, said a blunt instrument pierced Acosta's stomach while minor wounds were found on the right elbow and chest.

"We are discounting premeditated killing because if it were, the victim should not have been able to take him-self to the hospital after the stabbing. The assailant should not have carried out the killing in such manner," Parcon said.

He said the incident could have occurred near the town center of Batac because the victim managed to reach the hospital despite his wound.

Acosta had been working with Aksyon Radyo as a reporter for more than 10 years. He used to cover the police beat and the activities of the Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative (Inec) at its main office in Laoag town.

He was with the late press corps for a Christmas party at the Scottsvon hotel until 9 p.m. when the affair ended. He was a member of the press group.

No known threat

Mel Jay Agustin, Aksyon Radyo news director, said there was no known threat against Acosta during his stay with the radio station.

"He would tell me about his problems at work and at home. But he never confided that there was any threat against his life," Agustin said.

He said Acosta's personal belongings, including a recorder, radio monitor and several documents were found intact, inside his bag.

"We do not rule out the possibility that his death was work-related. But it could also be a case of petty quarrel," Agustin said.

In Cagayan, two newscasters of Bombo Radyo Tuguegarao expressed fear that they might be killed anytime after receiving death threats because of their "unrelenting exposés of abuses, corruption and killings of left-leaning militants."

NUJP statement

Regie Sending and Merelin Manuel, hosts of "Money Big Time" and "Tama Lang," said anonymous calling men had been seen near their radio station.

Recently, they also received a note that read: "Tigilan n'yo na itong Alleng na 'yan n'yo. Ding hatinong ni. Your days are numbered."

In its statement, the NUJP called on the government authorities to "exercise its political will by bringing the killers of journalists—gunmen and masterminds alike—to justice and end the culture of impunity which has allowed these attacks to continue."

The killing occurred two days after NUJP branches on information campaign for journalists' safety that seeks to increase risk awareness among journalists and arm them with needed information to minimize danger. With a report from Jeleanor Cubeo, Inquirer Northern Luzon

PASEGURUHAN NG MGA NAGLILINGKOD SA PAMAHALAAN (GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM)
Financial Center, Pasay City, Metro Manila 1308

December 8, 2006

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Winston F. Garcia
President and General Manager

Local officials divided over people's initiative

From page A1

yesterday denied that their group was preparing a second petition for filing with the Commission on Elections to amend the 1987 Constitution through a people's initiative, as Eastern Samar Gov. Ben Evardone said on Wednesday.

"Ulap has not taken a position on the matter, much less making a petition to be filed before the Comelec," Pantaleon, a councilor of Mandaue City and president of the Philippine Councilors League, said in Cebu City.

Serapio said he and Bohol Gov. Erico Aumentado, Ulap president, were surprised to read Evardone's remarks in the Internet. He said Evardone "might just be expressing his personal views."

But on the phone yesterday with the Inquirer, Evardone stood by his statement that Ulap was readying the second petition for approval by its board.

"I never said Ulap has decided to file a second petition. That's what we will take up, hopefully when everybody is through with all the [holiday] parties and meets next month. All I said was that we have three options available for us to change the Constitution, as stated by the President, and one of them is a second [petition for a] people's initiative. It is our responsibility to explore all our options," he said.

Aumentado could not be reached for comment yesterday. Repeated calls to his phone by Inquirer correspondents were unanswered.

Imperative

Evardone said filing the second petition had become more of an "imperative," considering the Supreme Court ruling that junked the original petition but reaffirmed the legality of a people's initiative for Charter change.

He admitted that local government officials were divided not only on the best mode to push constitutional amendments but also on whether Charter change should be pursued in time for the midterm elections in May.

"There are some who want a second petition [for a people's initiative], while others prefer a constitutional convention," he said.

Both Evardone and Aumentado were present when a group of governors met with the President early this month to ask her to withdraw support from the consolidated assembly being pushed by Speaker Jose de Venecia and his allies in the House.

The governors told Ms Arroyo that their constituencies were against the postponement of the May polls and the extension of the terms of elected officials, as stipulated in the resolutions assembly planned without the participation of the Senate.

No mooting

In Cebu, Serapio said there was no mooting planned in January to finalize the second petition, as Evardone had claimed.

He said Ulap officials had not had a chance to discuss their next position on Charter change since the Supreme Court struck down in October the petition for a people's initiative.

Pantaleon said the officials were supposed to hold a meeting in Metro Manila last week to discuss the high court's ruling but that it did not push through.

He added that he did not know where Evardone got the information that Ulap was readying the second petition for a people's initiative to amend the Charter to allow a shift to a presidential-parliamentary, instead of a parliamentary, form of government.

Pantaleon also said that while Evardone was a leading member of Ulap, he was not its spokesperson.

He said Albay Vice Gov. James Calisin, president of the Vice Governors' League of the Philippines, was the public information officer and spokesperson of Ulap.

Calisin himself sent a letter to the Inquirer saying that he was the real Ulap spokesperson and that his group was "disclaiming" Evardone's statements on the supposed second petition.

"Even during the previous National Executive Board meetings, we did not hear or mention such issues," he said, adding that he made the disclaimer on documented evidence.

With officers' consent

Asked to comment, Evardone said he had never claimed to be the spokesperson of Ulap.

"It is the media that labeled me a spokesperson, and I can't blame them because I have spoken in behalf of the group on numerous occasions in the past with the consent of the officers," he said.

He added that he was the public relations officer of the Philippine League of Governors.

Government Warning:
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Humane treatment of elderly urged

From page A1

moved of this," he says.

There are many humane ways to deal with the elderly, Gochuico says, adding that a number of human laws designed to discuss the matter and recommend how young family members may contribute to a harmonious relationship.

Family responsibility

The Christian obligation to go beyond the elderly's physical needs is a family responsibility. But it is now common practice among younger people to let love dwindled in the care of their parents because they have a family of their own.

This is unacceptable, Gochuico says.

"Children are obliged to help their parents financially. They should also extend help to the caregiver, especially if he/she is a sibling. But visiting elderly parents, especially when they are sick, is a form of abuse," he says.

To prevent misunderstanding, Gochuico says, elderly people in their vigorous stage should write an advance directive specifying how they wish to be cared for.

He also says that while institutional care is acceptable in certain urgent cases, children should think it over often this.

Caring for roots

According to Marilou "Lilloy" Gaylon and Bantay Matanda founder Ishida Joaquin, sending their mothers to a care institution has never crossed their mind.

Gaylon's mother, Thelia, was afflicted with a heart ailment in 1999 and was found to have dementia four years later. But before that has a lesser problem, too.

She also thought her parents had saved up for the proverbial rainy day. But she was wrong, because after her parents had spent for their children's education, nothing much was left.

The pensions they are receiving can barely meet the rising cost of medicines and hospitalbills.

"But I never tell them that there is not much money left and that I am experiencing difficulties. I don't want my parents to think of finances, because this might lead them to depression. My main focus is to make them feel loved even if it means no longer thinking of myself," says a tearful Cayton.

Joaquin points out that problems arise because the many faces of the relationship between the elderly and the young are seldom discussed.

"It is not sufficient to take care of old folks' physical needs," she says.

She also notes that understanding smallest personals sense of belonging takes time.

"In our culture, having the only girl in the family and the youngest knows you no choice but to take care of your aging parent," Joaquin says of her circumstances.

"If the children are married, elderly parents usually stay with their daughters, not their sons. But this I count as a privilege more than a burden, for I believe that those who take care of their parents are truly blessed."

Joaquin cares for her mother who is also afflicted with dementia.

She and Gaylon share a wealth of experience. Both admit on many occasions that result in misunderstanding, "but nothing as serious as permanent irreconcilable differences," says Joaquin.

Street elders

But Lito Arbolilla and Juanita Jaylan say they are fine living on their own on sidewalk beds near the headquarters of Barangay 660 on Quirino Street in Sta. Ana, Manila.

Their children have urged them to come home, to no avail.

Jaylan, 54, is a widow with two children. She says she makes P300 in three weeks, selling recyclable stuff.

Arbolilla describes his life as very simple. His family lives in Fairview, Quezon City, and a 16-year-old daughter looks in on him now and then.

One asks if they ever feel neglected, and they reply with a hostile note.

"Our condition at this juncture is our choice. No one pushed us to live like this," Arbolilla said. Jaylan says no Filipino.

Lack of laws

"This," they say, pointing to the ample sleeping space, "is enough. We want to live as independently as we can. This is the kind of life we want. Is there something wrong with what is OK with us?"

If that is the case, says Gochuico, it's because people lack awareness of the rights of the elderly.

"If only Congress passes a bill on national health care insurance for elders from diverse walks of life, it will be a lot easier for us to live peacefully in our old age," he says.

He concedes that the senior citizen's card is an advantage, but points out that it is "not as wide-range and as deeply-enriching as understanding the complexities of caring for old people."

Gochuico says the media can help 'educate' Congress by pushing for provident legislation.

"The problem is, politicians have passed the buck to private citizens like us. They do not realize that the elderly need down to-your laws or spell out a comprehensive geriatric system to include national healthcare," he says, adding:

"Those who commit crimes on elders should be penalized, too."

The number of elders in the Philippines is estimated at 6.3 million.

"Are elders left to suffer because they comprise a small voting population?" Gochuico asks.

A series of unfortunate incidents at int'l airports

From page A1

agent, where he learned that a month-old baby was passed under an X-ray machine scanning hand luggage at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).

The Los Angeles Times on Wednesday reported that a 56-year-old woman travelling to Mexico had placed her premature ex a plastic tray intended for carry-on items and slid the tiny, extra contraption belt.

Airport officials watching X-ray screens only saw something was wrong when the baby's outline showed up on their monitors, the newspaper said.

The baby was removed immediately and taken to a hospital for a checkup. Doctors determined the infant had not received a dangerous dose of radiation.

"The lady obviously mistakenly put the baby in the machine, it was an unfortunate incident," Transportation Security Administration spokesperson Nico Melendez said.

The grandmother and her grandchild were subsequently allowed to continue their journey to Mexico City.

Security experts quoted by the Times said the incident highlighted concerns about screening procedures at LAX and other airports.

"The screeners are still reporting that they're being pushed," Melendez said.

But an official with the Transportation Security Administration, which manages LAX screeners, said the organization did not have enough workers to monitor what was being slid under X-ray machines.

Airport officials said it was an innocent mistake by an inexperienced traveler and was only the second such incident at LAX since 1986, when a baby in a car seat went through an X-ray scanner.

Charged double

In France, a man who had sailed through tight airport screening procedures found himself locked in a courtroom battle with an airline.

The apparently overweight passenger has sued Air France after being told he was too fat and had to pay for a second seat to accommodate his bulk.

Jean-Jacques Jauffret, a French lawyer, said he was furious on Wednesday that he felt humiliated by Air France staff who had measured his waist in public at the New Delhi airport in 2005 and decided he was too big for a single seat.

A lawyer representing Air France told a court on Tuesday that the airline had a clear policy of asking obese passengers to pay for two seats.

"Let's be objective. This man is fat," lawyer Bernard Gastaud told the court in Bobigny, according to Le Parisien newspaper. "He barely fits in the comfortable chair. How could he sit in an airplane?"

Jauffret was not available for comment. But Jauffret confirmed the lawyer's comments and said he was disappointed with the "embarrassment" on countless occasions during the hearing.

"I felt shocked and humiliated by what he said," Jauffret added.

Jauffret said he weighed more than 160 kilos (352.7 lb) and said he had been mistaken for Jabba, the bulky gangster character in the Star Wars movies, after dressing on other Air France flights, without ever being asked to pay more.

Air France's website urges overweight passengers to reserve a second seat, adding that failure to do so might mean they are refused access to an aircraft if it is fully booked.

Jauffret has asked for 8,000 euros (US$10,400) in damages and 3,000 euros in compensation for the cost of the additional ticket. A verdict in the case is due on Feb. 20.

Lucky passenger

No such unfortunate incident befell a Taiwanese scientist who took a morning Cathay Pacific flight from Hong Kong and arrived at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport on Wednesday.

When she landed, she was welcomed with lights.

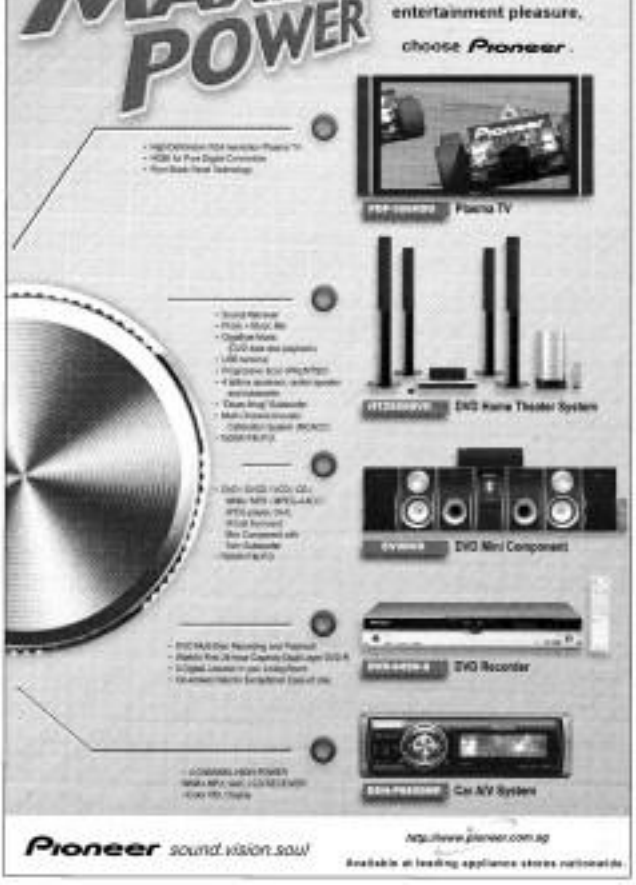
The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which runs the airports and other transit hubs in the region, said Liang Chen was the lucky 100 millionth traveler for Kennedy LaGuardia and Newark Liberty International airports.

In honor of the dizzying distinction, Chen was lavished with gifts, including airline tickets, hotel accommodations and tickets to a New York Mets game.

The Chen airport legend last under 100 million travelers last year. And they are on track to handle 104 million by the end of 2006, an increase of more than 3.6percent in just four years.

The new statistic caps a series of record years for the three airports. Last year's traffic set one, as did the more than 50.6 million passengers who jostled through in the first half of this year. Newark's passenger count for a new high of 34.2 million this weekend, surpassing a record set in2005.

The passenger records are a measure of a rebound in air traffic since the airborne terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, which spurred a sharp downturn in air travel and led to airline bankruptcies. Reports from AFP, Reuters and AP



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600 peace advocates to tour ex-US bases

OLONGAPO CITY—SOME 600 JAPANESE and Filipino peace advocates are scheduled to arrive here today (Friday, Dec. 31) for a financial and environmental tour of the Subic Bay Freeport Zone, a former American naval base.

The Alliance for Basic Citizen-ship (ABC), composed of two provincial organizations of military toxic victims from Clark and Subic, will spearhead the study tour that will tackle the Philippine base movement's contribution to world peace during its six-week drive to close down the bases in 1991.

"We are excited with the prospect of deepening the people-to-people exchange between Japanese, Koreans and Filipinos when the Peace and Green boat docks at the Subic Freeport Zone," Myrla Siddemabu, ABC president, said.

The Peace and Green boat, carrying the foreign adventurers, is expected to arrive Friday morning for whole-day activities to be held here and inside the Subic Bay Freeport zone.

As part of the tour, the foreign adventurers will participate in a forum with ABC officers and members to share information on the impact of the toxic legacy of US bases on the health, environment and future conversion, Siddemabu said.

"To many, especially the former base workers of what was once the Subic Naval Base, it is interesting to hear about the Peace and Green boat coming not to make war but to promote peace," she said. Allan Macatuno, Inquirer Central Luzon

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ERRATUM
On the full page ad of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines which appeared on page A17 of the Dec. 28 issue of the Inquirer, the word "Educational" was inadvertently written as "Education". Our sincerest apologies.

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A Christmas message from the convenors of One Voice to our signatories and valued allies:

We thank you all for speaking out when the charter train threatened to misuse democratic processes for self-serving purposes, and many were silent. We thank you for the trust and the unwavering commitment. Together, we battled in the trenches when it mattered the most. As we all look back and survey the havoc and waste that the battle left in its wake, we may wonder if it was worth the effort.

We may wonder if this is indeed a new beginning to finally get the country and the government we deserve or if this will be just another lost opportunity, another inconsequential footnote in our history. We may wonder if, after the back-slapping and merriment of the moment, and the hopeful picture of solidarity, we will again go back to our separate lives and leave the country to the political games and agendas of those who were voted to serve but have repeatedly failed the people.

We think we can all say it was worth it. But we cannot let history repeat itself for the nth time. Our country is too precious and too often betrayed to be left alone to face that fate. Let us celebrate the moment and enjoy the good cheer, and then prepare for the many more battles ahead.

Remember our 5-point program:
(1) stop the so-called people's initiative;
(2) social reforms program now;
(3) electoral reform now and credible 2007 elections as an indirect referendum on the present administration;
(4) a constitutional convention, not a constituent assembly, if necessary;
(5) work collectively in restoring the trustworthiness of our democratic institutions.

Much has been achieved. But clearly, there is more work ahead of us, more difficult than before. But there are more of us now. The silent majority are finding their voice and are speaking out loudly for our leaders to hear – we want real change.

We will work with all groups who want real change. We will learn from one another, share our expertise and resources and take the lead on issues and concerns when that leadership is called for. Otherwise, we are all foot soldiers in the service of a nation. What is important is to broaden and deepen the national dialogue and to work together harmoniously for the good of all, but especially for those who deserve a better life than what democracy has given them.

After the holidays, after we have spent time communing with our families and friends, after we have renewed our faith in the real meaning of Christmas, and have thanked the Lord for His many blessings, let us get together, pray together and plan for the days ahead. There is work to be done.

Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year to all.

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Muslim ...

From page A1

...Ibn Abi in the Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael for Allah (an event that runs parallel to the biblical story of Abraham offering his beloved son Isaac to God).

Following the lunar calendar, Eid al-Adha falls on Dec. 20-21 this year ... a supposedly solemn but definitely festive vacuum in the Christmas calendar.

That explains why Bautista and the rest of his community are just as merry as the Christians, as though the Christmas spirit has rubbed off on them, too.

"Don't be surprised if you see Muslims decorating their houses, putting on their best clothes, and preparing the best meals," Bautista told me in response to an interview Sunday night. "The coming week is also very important for all of us."

Parallelisms

The merging this year of the Christian and Islamic occasions highlights the curious parallelisms between the two great religions.

They are not too different, after all, as will be seen in Muslim communities beginning early on Monday, Bautista said.

His house, which also serves as an office for his non-religious advocacy work, is adorned with "Christmas" lights in white and green, which are, he said, the colors of Islam.

While Filipino Catholics hold their traditional dawn Masses (*Simbang gabi*) starting on Dec. 16, Muslims who number around 10 million in the Philippines have a tough equivalent to attend to: a basis of congregational worship in mosques that usually begins at around 5 a.m.

The community worship follows the regular *subuh* [or early morning prayer] which starts at around 4 a.m., according to Bautista.

For *subuh* on Monday, Muslims put on their best clothes before converging with their families and the rest of the community in mosques. Filipino Muslims usually bring native delicacies like *dodol* (thick version of the sticky *bukayo*) and *tinkoy* (a form of rice cake) like Bibingka, Cuchinta and suman.

"After the prayers, families somehow compare notes on who got to share the most food with people in the vicinity of the mosque," Bautista said.

"Elsewhere, it's an open house where everyone gets to taste what other households have prepared," he said.

No Scrooge

But even if Eid al-Adha does not fall within the Christmas week, Bautista said he was not one to play Scrooge to the Christmas around him.

He said he had made it a habit to respond to Christmas greeting cards by around yuletide from well-meaning Christians. But his reply each would contain the phrase "season's greetings," not the customary "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

"It's my way of joining the Christians in their celebration without running my back on my faith," he said, adding that he would also exchange greetings with his Catholic or Christian friends.

Bautista said he was careful not to commemorate Christmas per se: doing so, he said, would create the impression that he was "singling out" or putting Jesus above the other prophets mentioned in the Koran.

Through the years, his friends have come to appreciate his points and, in the process, understand the misunderstood Islamic faith, he said.

Party rigmarole

Bautista is often invited to the annual Christmas party of the papal nuncio or the ambassador of the Holy See in the Philippines.

On many occasions, he said, he had seen raffle prizes of wine or ham. Knowing that his faith allows neither prize, party organizers started accompanying him a bag a prayer beads, or a dozen (still blessed).

One time in the 1970s, Bautista, then a business executive, attended his company's Christmas party

FILIPINO Muslims usually share native delicacies, like those leaves display... prayers during the weeklong celebration of Eid al-Adha starting Dec. 19.

...this time around, he said, he would...

...surprises before...

...The men know his...

...cake prize.

...To refresh the...

...hosts grown a...

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Religious tolerance

Bautista's openness...

...not exactly become...

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...Ism, Bautista said he...

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Virgin ma awaits arrival of offspring

From page A1

dfferentiate. It has been seen in about 70 species, including snakes and lizards. Scientists are unsure whether female komodo dragons have always had this latent ability to reproduce or if this is a new evolutionary development.

At 8 years old, Flora—whom Buley describes as "feminist"—is sexually mature. Having been soaked in captivity she has never been exposed to a male komodo dragon. She lives with her younger sister, Nenette.

Flora's keepers first became suspicious in May when she laid 20 eggs.

Though it's not uncommon for female dragons to lay eggs without mating, such eggs are not usually fertilized. As a precaution, they were placed in an incubator, where half of Flora's eggs hatched like real eggs—they were very white and had solid shells.

When three of them collapsed, scientists took a closer look.

"We saw blood vessels and a small embryo," said Buley, one of the Mclean study's authors. "And we knew immediately that Flora had fertilized the eggs herself."

They then sent the collapsed eggs, along with tissue samples from Flora, Nenette, and a male komodo dragon, to a laboratory in nearby Liverpool that conducted genetic testing to determine the eggs' parentage.

Results showed that although the baby komodo dragons are not exact Flora clones, their DNA could not have come from any other dragon.

Back to normal mating

In the London Zoo, Sungai gave birth to four dragon hatchlings in April through self-fertilization. After their births, Sungai went on to mate normally with a male dragon, producing another baby dragon.

"Komodo dragons seem to be able to switch ways of reproducing—from sexual reproduction to asexual—and back," said Dr. Rich Shine, a professor of evolutionary biology at the University of Sydney, Australia. Shine was not involved with the Nature paper.

In contrast, other lizard species that reproduce asexually cannot mate normally.

That might give komodos a distinct survival edge. Only about 4,000 dragons remain in the wild, of which 1,000 are female. Concerns about dwindling komodo dragon populations might be allayed by Flora and Sungai's recent self-induced motherhood.

"If female dragons can on occasion help out by virgin births, more power to them," said Trooper Walsh, a US-based komodo dragon expert, who was not connected to the study.

"Komodo dragons are the ultimate survivors," said Walsh. "This is just another way this species can adapt to its surroundings."

Implications

The discovery that komodo dragons can reproduce asexually also has major implications for how they will be bred in captivity in the future.

Every komodo dragon in Europe is listed in a so-called "studbook," a kind of dating service for dragons.

Decisions about which komodo dragons should be paired up are made to maximize genetic variability. Knowing now that self-fertilization is possible, scientists will have to be much more rigorous in determining dragon parentage and in their matchmaking schemes.

Experts are also keen to find out how pervasive virgin births are in the wild.

"It's baffling why a species exists doing this," said Dr. Kevin de Queiroz, a research zoologist at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington, who was not involved with the paper. "It would be helpful to know how often this happens and what the mechanism is that allows them do this."

A more detailed understanding of parthenogenesis might even accelerate research into stem cells or allow certain diseases to be modeled in the laboratory. And if scientists can perfect parthenogenesis, they might also be able to save endangered wildlife species.

Hatching anticipated

In the meantime, Buley and his colleagues at the Chester Zoo are eagerly anticipating the hatching of Flora's remaining eggs.

A Christmas arrival, according to Buley, would probably be on the early side, since the baby dragons are not technically due until January.

The timing, he says, is more coincidence.

"We will only begin to worry if we start to see a really bright star outside the zoo on Christmas Eve," he said.

AP

HEALTHY CHOICE FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE
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lsafp holds lavish . . .

From page A1

...ssie added. Draft beer flowed and ...ed drinks were available in cases.

The stage groaned with raffle ...rizes that included motorcycles, ...liances, TV sets, ovens, electric ...ns, mountain bikes and cyber home ...plainees, the source said.

... but before midnight, the party was ...interrupted with a video presentation on ... exposure of fugitive former Sen. Gerardo Hontanar at the Bulalay Town ...ses in Quezon City last month.

As a way of introducing the video, ...members of SBG-21, the lead operator ...ng team in the arrest of the alleged ...ump-headed, pomaded-to-heavenly skin ...ad stunned a barely dressed man ...d woman, apparently referring to ...ontanar and his friend, Rajah ...mmo, the source said.

After the video presentation, Batugal ...stood up and commended the team.

"Para everybody started shouting, ...ang fire the engines!" the source ...ded.

A sergeant assigned to one of the ...ady-cooks confirmed that "engorge", ...their code name for Batugal, who ...as head of the Presidential Security ...roup, before he was named body ...ard months ago.

SBG-21, the body unit that has ...ts electronic intelligence, was in ...e limelight last year when former ...ational Bureau of Investigation ...gent chief Samuel Ong named ...BG-21 agent Tyrge Mdal Dolor as ...e source of the "Hello Garci" tapes.

Dolor was "grounded" by the body ...ardership, but no charges were filed ...st her had apparently ensconced ...r work at SBG-21.

The buzz was got a confirmed report last month that Dolor was among the body agents who were "incinerated" for the operations that led to the arrest of Honasan.

The revelry continued past midnight with Batugal whipping out a bundle of P500 bills and throwing them to his audience, one of the sources said.

"It was fun and we tried to catch the bills. Wala akong nahuhi (Grabbed something)," one sergeant said with a laugh.

Batugal also trampled some of the bills into paper balls and tossed them to the audience, the sources said.

"He was drunk, that would explain his behavior," one of the sources said.

The revelry continued with the "emperor" offering P1,000 to anyone who could drink a mug of draft beer in one swig, the sources said.

"It was like Oktoberfest," the source added.

Still having fun at the beer-drinking party, Batugal also offered P1,000 to anyone who could dance with a bottle of beer on his head—without spilling a drop.

All the money-throwing fun were done to the tune of Showcase's (musician TV show) "Bomboman" tune," the source continued.

Another source said Batugal had been throwing parties at body almost every other day just this month alone.

On Tuesday, Batugal also brought the body staff to a party with President Macapagal-Arroyo aboard the presidential yacht Wag-Wagsak."

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Lackeys

EDITORIAL

IN THE TUG OF WAR OVER DANIEL SMITH, WHICH has the Philippine government joining hands with the United States against our judiciary, the issues are only two: First, when can legal proceedings be said to have been completed? Was it when Smith was convicted, and sentenced, or is it when all appeals have been exhausted? Second, can someone convicted by our courts be held under US custody? Everything else, as President Macapagal-Arroyo's allies in the House of Representatives like to say, is nonsensical and irrelevant. Particularly in the face of what we've pointed out to be the quite reasonable legal opinions of Judge Benjamin Pozon with regard to the Visiting Forces Agreement.

It doesn't take a legal genius to realize a trial has a beginning, and an end. And that the end of a trial comes when the defendant is asked to rise, and the presiding judge reads the verdict and hands down a sentence. At that moment, the defendant becomes a convict; if sentenced to jail, even a defendant out on bail is immediately taken into custody and imprisoned.

The law affords the convict ample opportunities to appeal the verdict. In that manner, the Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court can either overturn or modify the sentence or order a retrial. But until such time as a superior court either confirms or overturns a verdict, the verdict stands.

Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith of the US Marines didn't lose a civil case. He was found guilty of a criminal act: rape. Rape is a non-bailable offense in the Philippines and a convicted rapist certainly cannot be allowed to stay out of jail, which is what is going to happen if Smith is put under the custody of the US government. Giving him that privilege would amount to a privilege that is not open to Filipino citizens.

As we've pointed out in the past, Pozon hasn't tried to read the VFA in an arbitrary or whimsical way, but rather, with the fullest appreciation for the special circumstances the agreement spells out for American servicemen convicted by our courts.

Which begs the second question: Is the US Embassy correct in insisting that Smith be held as its prisoner? Was the Philippine government correct in agreeing with, and trying to uphold, the Americans position? We think not.

Pozon interprets the VFA as saying that a convicted American must be held in a Philippine facility, but one mutually agreed upon by both the American and Philippine governments. Logic dictates such a reading. If an American facility on US soil was the intention of the agreement, then the Philippines might as well have abandoned all efforts to negotiate such an agreement. Or put another way, the Philippine government might as well have agreed that crimes committed by American servicemen be prosecuted in American courts, tried according to US law, and sentences handed out and served in the United States.

The agreement is meant to uphold the concept of accountability under our laws and according to our legal system, with punishment being a Philippine responsibility, subject to America being accorded the chance to serve its own obligations to its citizens to ensure their safety. But that is as far as American privileges are meant to extend.

To our mind, this would mean that the US government would be within its rights to insist on a level of comfort for Smith that matches federal or US military facilities an American serviceman convicted of a similar crime would be detained on US soil, which is what the American Embassy is.

That there is no clear agreement between our government and the American as to what and where such a facility might be is not the fault of the courts. Pozon has merely opted for what is equally logically the default position for any self-respecting Filipino: until such a facility has been identified, a standard Philippine jail must do.

Our government, however, has spent its time trying to tie the hands of the US Embassy instead of upholding a reasonable and dignified interpretation of the VFA. It could have constructed a special facility by now. But it seems to be more interested in fighting our own legal system than upholding it.

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GMA lies again

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

"WE WILL PUT CHA-CHA IN THE BALLOT," he said. "We will let the people decide when to change the Constitution"—President Macapagal-Arroyo, Dec. 14, 2006.

"We cannot say we are hurrying off [from] ... Charter change"—Malacañang, Dec. 18, 2006.

Perhaps it is too much to expect GMA to remain true to her word, considering her past record. But it took years before she contemplated in her promise not to run for reelection, and nobody believed her. In particular, the rats. It took months after her "I am sorry" speech on the Garci tapes before she unburdened again. Now only four days separated her promise to drop Cha-cha and the statement that Cha-cha will ride again.

But what did you expect? She is getting more adept at the Machiavellian vice. When GMA is finally turned over to the Palace where she doesn't belong, she can find a job as a scribe.

I wanted everyone about that, didn't I? I said that like Frankenstein's monster and Invincible, the Cha-cha monster would rise from the dead and take everyone by all, and therefore we should not let our guard down. Still it came as a surprise that the unwanted came so soon.

Lying and doublespeak have become a plague in Malacañang since GMA moved in. It has become an addiction worse than drug addiction, anxiety and alcoholism. The people there, it seems, lie because they cannot help it. It has become a habit.

Malacañang, no doubt, was emboldened by the less than expected turnout at last Sunday's protest rally of the Catholic Church. But the low turnout was not caused by the failure of the manner of the bishops who, rightly or wrongly, harmed politicians from speaking or appearing on the stage and banned placards and banners. The promise of the administration to put Cha-cha "on the back burner and let the people decide" plus the warning of Senate President Franklin Drilon to government employees against joining the rally and the threat of National Security adviser Norberto Gonzales to label all leftists as one-time communists were all intended to dampen the enthusiasm of the pro-

MALACAÑANG'S TENACITY PROVES ONE thing. If they want it, nothing can stop them. If they don't, nothing will move them. It applies to Charter change. How many times would they have to be rebuffed, denounced and rejected before they give it up?

But it applies as well to the unrelenting accusations of brazen abuse, activists. If the killings have not stopped to this day, after the unarmed bloodletting in broad daylight in their homes and in front of family members, it can only be for lack of trying, for lack of political resolve by Malacañang to find any real solution to the problem.

Stated otherwise, if only the Palace had been as hellbonded in halting the arrest deaths as it has been in manipulating the law to first track Charter change, maybe now, more than half a year after the death squads began killing their non-soldiers, we would have saved a few more lives and the orphaned children would be celebrating a happier Christmas with their new "disappeared" parents.

I had it out here for the recent commotions of the Charter change people. Malacañang's tepid response to the declaration of the Left may have been explained away with the old "Arab Street" argument: We are a typical Third World government. Big on words but weak on action. But Ms Arroyo is now the last person who can invoke that, after all, it is she who embodies the "Strong Republic" and, worse, a republic strong against its enemies but even stronger responding to elites and interests.

Mark Twain would rest well here spoken of Charter change when he said, "Reports of my death are greatly exaggerated." Patricia Hilpert have been sung for the Charter change campaign, and each time it lives again, which is not exactly the good bishops' idea of the promise of the resurrection.

First, the Supreme Court shot down Plan B, the Arroyo people's initiative by Sigaw ng Bayan and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP), calling it a "pantalan fraud on the people." Now, the people's outrage drowned the congressmen who were bullhorn or a "blown-only" courtroom assembly ignoring the history and bypassing the constitutional safeguard of bicameralism. I was amazed of the lengths the Palace went, moving heaven and earth lengthwise on the heaven part) to keep people away from the Dec. 17 Diwalyo prayer rally at the Luneta Grand stand, and more so were they a sure false up, having formed around the corner.

They tried some tactics: the Reds will infiltrate it and the rallies would become the victories' targets. They tried disinformation: the rally was off limits to politicians and celebrities. Then they physically blocked hundreds of provincial rallyers at entry points in Manila.

Then the final disincentive. Why bother to rally, when your goal has been achieved? The House has already voted down, so what's the point? Indeed, haven't you heard President Arroyo herself?

Listen to the President: "Philippine democracy will always find the proper time and opportunity for Charter reform at a time when the people deem it ripe and wrought, and in the manner they deem proper." Having taken the wind out of Cha-cha's sails, she concludes: "I confirmed the dark clouds of the Asian bondage in an act of statesmanship to unify not only the two chambers of the legislature but the whole nation around the issue of Charter change."

Bitch that, I thought the President (with the wing-dit palace on Speaker Jose de Venecia's doomed "constituent assembly" right after EDSA and his cohorts locked off on Charter change at a hurriedly convened Saturday session of the 1987 and you will see advertisements and propaganda materials pasted on the walls. The policemen themselves will help you prepare the documents for a petition. Of course, these policemen get commissions from the gun stores for every gun they sell. Instead of preventing the spread of guns, policemen become sales agents for gun stores.

The 1987 chief should wake up (is this irresponsible). The deadliest menace of the time is approaching. Many Filipinos will die of gunshot wounds this coming election period unless measures are taken to prevent it. It is already starting.

* * *

PFC Alan Costa is an accomplished pianist, but he is also a singer—and not just any singer, but an opera singer. He learned the opera under the tutelage of the late Jesús de la Fuente.

Because Alan is not only a journalist and only survivor of a presidential plane crash, he is also an opera singer.

Together, Costa, tenor and Mara, baritone, will display their singing prowess in a concert at the Ateneo Adelio Hall, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, on Jan. 9, 2007 starting at 7 p.m.

Costa will sing 14 arias from Giuseppe Verdi's opera. Mara will sing in the duet "Solenne in Quest'ora" from "La Forza del Destino." Enrico Caruso and Antonio Scotti's dramatic singing of the duet set at a reported extraordinary popularity during the Metropolitan Opera New York performances which opened in 1918.

Both these singers will be the attending artist. Admission is free.

* * *

The Philets Foundation of the University of Sto. Tomas will hold its para-Christmas and pre-New Year party on Dec. 28, 2006, starting at 5 p.m., at the Quezon City Sports Club on E. Rodriguez Avenue. Dinner price is P300 and those for exchange gifts should not cost more than P300 each, and purely voluntary. For further information, you may call Manolo Ibon at 328-1282 or +6392.7901.9318.

Such dissent topics

The ghost of Pinochet

WORLD VIEW

Rodrigo Pardo

THE DEATH OF GEN. AUGUSTO PINOCHET, Chile's former military dictator, provides perhaps an appropriate end for a year that saw the Latin American Left botch or gloss a number of things. Chavez's overwhelming reelection in Venezuela is but the strongest sign. No wonder in the days of Pinochet, the rest of the Left has mostly vanished, or tried to.

Indeed, the Left has won in countries in which it has previously never held power. Despite the fact that the remains of Felipe Calderon in Mexico, Alvaro Uribe in Colombia and Alan Garcia in Peru are going to a supposed center of moderate views, the fact is that they have left the left to unspeakables.

Chavez is no longer a lonely populist. In the Andean region, he is accompanied by two clones that are rebounding his template. Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador in the case of the former have, like Chavez, come to office thanks to ballots by Wall Street and London bankers — with neo-Jim Crow's penance, his soldier will in part eventually re-enact him.

The other left, however, is not radical. The region's biggest country, the potential addendum of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua and Mel Zelaya in Honduras, one of the most dominated members of G8 foreign policy during the 1980s, provides cautionary testimony to that. Ortega won, thanks to an almost-split in the right-wing Liberal vote, with a mere 38 percent. He only ideology nowadays is United Ortega. Lately delivered Dilanna Morales, who would have personality issues to be dark-tressed Chavez.

That the Latin American Right can sleep at night despite his leftward tilt is not merely the result of communism's disappearance. Neither does it mean that the United States has given up its hegemonic intentions. The explanation lies in the fact that much of today's Left is not the Left as we have known it.

Instead, today's Left looks at growth, fiscal discipline and outgovernments with pragmatism, and not as ideological flags to economic proposals to use debts to charisma. It looks at race with politics such as class followed by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Ortega, who has gone from Marxist to those implacable by the Sandinista Presidents Ricardo Lagos and Michele Bachelet in Chile. Even activism can no longer be had by attacking big banks or the International Monetary Fund.

So there is a historic between today's Left and Right, and it is found in the realm of social issues rather than complex and marriages, religious freedom, abortion and human equality. These matters have been increasing in importance, and are serving a clash between the political haves that have just come to power and their conservative opposition.

Foreign affairs also forms another divide. The Latin American Left does not share George W. Bush's view of the world. The global issues, it has been said by the United States in the region, it does not believe America's dislike for institutions and it is unwilling to join the anti-terror crusade.

In Latin American affairs, it balks at the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and generally shows reluctance with the United States that grew to a position local statements. Right-leaning rulers such as Presidents Uribe in Colombia still like to speak about their special relationship with Bush, but their backing of his foreign policy President Lula and others on the Left merely prefer to hold their tongues.

Everything suggests that the new moderate Latin American Left is more political than economic. And it is here where its biggest challenges will emerge. An economic force or growth and macroeconomic balance can lead to frustration among those sectors that are demanding better living conditions when they cannot fulfill new social demands Left requires.

Education — by quality more than in sense — was a key issue in all of Chile's most presidential elections. The debate over the ability of growth alone to realize poverty has become limited. If the new left does not manage to assure these questions successfully, it will be seen as having failed.

There is a precedent in the form of the previous decreased income by the Left over a final epoch of democratic mastery. However, even though values are drawn through popular wars, there are worrying signs of weakness in the region's democratic institutions. Presidents are too easily seduced or resisted as power (Uribe, Lula, Chavez, Ortega, Garcia), while a consequent accumulation of power and limits on the emergence of new leaders.

Moreover, the military remains politically influential in Chile, Argentina, Venezuela and Ecuador. Electoral systems are presidents enough to generate political situations such as that which prevailed recently throughout the summer, with its "two presidents." Parties may ground against the socialist advances in the region (the Lopez Obrador in Mexico and Chavez in Venezuela, and congresses are assured only of public antipathy.

Across Latin America, voters existing their economic hopes has opted for a new Left. That Left has obtained known incentives, thanks to a democracy whose success is still not guaranteed.

Rodrigo Pardo, former foreign minister of Colombia and ambassador to Venezuela and France, is editorial director of Semana magazine.

A funding 'El Niño'

AT LARGE

Elena Jimenez-David

THE SCENT OF SAMBOUGITA AND ROSES FILL museum by air as the courtyard of Congressman Bar Ian Teodoro, during the thanksgiving party hosted by "Tata Freedom Rape." That is an informal description of women and "women's groups" who had supported the compliance "friends" through out the process of investigation and trial that culminated in the conviction of American Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith.

But while in normal times and circumstances the said force would have disbanded by now, the members now find themselves having to circle the wagons once more, as the battle for money to finish the projects — which, with the help of the American government, but between Mickey's camp and Judge Benjamin Pozon on one hand, and the executive department — the DOJ, the DSWD, and the OWC — to enhance visits to the GI hideaway on the other.

Still, a billionaire local fund-lover reached and then night, a celebration, however muted, was called for.

"Friends" of course, was present, blending among the guests and mingling call and flyer, since the seat among friends and did not need to remain hesitant a parlor, or proceed but here with. Ambassador Kristie Kenney, a cup, a hand and a wife with high spirits, rose in some calm and collected all, but when she took the microphone to express her thanks, her voice broke as she linked to mention "everyone who was there to do." She could no longer continue, and had to turn the microphone over to another congressman, in tears herself and unbeseeching.

There was a program in Mister's honor and to honor all who had helped in the cause, including a gift of poetry readings, songs, dances and a reveal, involving the giving of sampaguita leis, long-stemmed roses and a shower of petals to practitioners approved.

There must be another announcement, but the hope is everyone's heart, I am sure, is that this case will be settled soon, the honor for blame to there on and have the future.

* * *

THROUGH the years, my work as a journalist and feminist have led me to various non-governmental organizations, most of them dealing with women's issues, where I have ended up on a number of the board of trustees.

Whenever I'm invited to sit on an NGO board, I usually decline by explaining that I'm neither rich nor famous, and that I have no time for board meetings, and I'm terrible at fund-raising. I can't make it to meetings and activities. The person on the other end of the line usually assures me that they aren't "only" once every three months" and that since I live further in the eastern there NGOs exposure, I end up signing on. The trouble is that, because of the many such groups I have joined, I find myself attending a board meeting or activity practically every month.

Because of the Christmas season, this has been an unusually busy time, with my previous distributed by Christmas parties and scheduled meetings. But it's worth it, I suppose. I hope but nothing to do with my presence in them, none of the NGOs I'm involved with are facing the sort of financial crisis or another.

The drying up of funds available to local NGOs has been attributed to the global economic crisis. International foundations and multilateral organizations have been systematically cutting back on their grants and allocations to NGOs, or shifting their focus to other parts of the globe or another area of capacity. Perhaps you are involved in a global funding NGO.

* * *

BUT the silver lining to this gloomy scenario is that the "NGO-ization" from the days when NGOs where I am involved to expect a funding shortfall and thus means to pool staff will continue or to receive substantially less than the end of the year as the fiscal quarter closes.

In our NGO, the staff are normally and all agencies have their salaries starting March, and then work as volunteers afterwards. If the "next year scenario" — meaning, the money expected from a European foundation doesn't come — happens. And though they will be refreshing as allowances, they were dismayed to hear from a recurring lawyer that they would still have to pay taxes on their meager income.

While some of us board members of another NGO voted against those no limit financial issues, at least for the short-term, our providers assured us that they would not hound employees before, with staff staying on as unpaid volunteers until some money came in.

Only in an NGO would I hear this news and not mind being here," I told a staff member. This reminded me that I am not alone in my love for the underdog of other organizations, certainly compounds the challenges inherent in this line of work.

* * *

SOME commentators have resigned in "NGO-bashing" of late, indiscriminately terming with the same insults all NGOs regardless of the honest efforts and dedication that services they provide, or the means they employ.

But the NGOs I've been involved with provide real services, which include advocacy even a wide range of issues that aren't so "saleable" or are too complex for easy public assignments.

The Women's Crisis Center provides temporary shelter, medical and psychological counseling, and other services to battered and abuse survivors of violence. Pinoy-Lead provides lesbian legal consultation on an individual or institutional basis, while continuing research and advocacy activities for women, especially reproductive rights. The Remedios AIDS Foundation runs a clinic for people living with HIV and engages in public education and advocacy programs. Friendly-Care Foundation has been a supporter of family health care clinics with emphasis on reproductive health.

And, of course, I have been involved for decades with the women's group Filipina, which promotes wider participation of women in politics and public power, as well as with Akbayan! Pinoy, the women's party-list group.

Is all of those I say: Mabuhay!

Rizal's last Christmas

LOOKING BACK

Jonbeth R. Cruzespo

EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING HAS MADE THEIR annual and sale with these two-thousand-and-Final Day from Dec. 30, the anniversary of Jose Rizal's death, to June 19, the anniversary of his birth. While it is traditional, and proper, to emulate as the national hero's main symbol, there is a more practical reason for a change. Each year Rizal Day passes by almost unnoticed because the official commemorative events during the Christmas fest than half an hour, and it's a wasted time on TV, radio or the Internet, almost everyone is asleep at 7 a.m., enjoying the holiday and the mild December weather. Since Rizal Day is caught between Christmas and the New Year, devotees commemorating his martyrdom are few and forlorn.

One would think that moving Rizal Day to June 19 would provide a logical excuse for reflections on nationhood by having a week-long celebration that begins on June 12, Independence Day, and ends on June 19, Rizal Day. Unfortunately, people are so comfortable with the present set up to even consider change. The same can be said about changing the academic calendar.)

Gone at present are have confined rules by us, servants of working and non-working holidays, we must always be on our thoughts. Perhaps by selling out the and declare all our holidays a year headcount as people and industry can plan ahead.

Christmas columns are the most difficult to compose simply because you have said almost everything there is to say about the season, and, as luck, just as we do with leftovers from Christmas parties and unwanted Christmas gifts.

I never thought about it all yesterday but in 1896 Rizal was so busy with his mind for treason that he did not mind not any Christmas cards or Christmas presents at all. All we have is a study letter to his lawyer Luis Taviel de Andrade, who was obviously moving to see him and discuss some fine points of his case. The letter was written from his cell in Fort Santiago on Christmas Day and reads (part):

"I have been writing for you this morning to speak with you about an important matter, but undoubtedly best pleasure did not permit you to come. If you have time to spare, I should like to see you this afternoon or tomorrow morning. I would appreciate it very much, this afternoon, this evening or morning.

"Wishing you Merry Christmas, I remain I am in your great intention, affectionate servant and friend, Jose Rizal."

Rizal Rizal was already prepared for a death sentence, his last Christmas must have been very miserable indeed. We have no record of his meals because most in his cell. Before the death penalty law was signed away by President Ramon Magsaysay in 1961, there was no need to write down the procedures being given a choice of a last meal, or at least being asked what food they would most before execution (but I doubt if they would have a lechon appetite at that point). In Rizal's case, the jailers were not that considerate. He was only given a couple of hand-boiled eggs as he did not eat. And, if we are to believe one source, it is said that when he was finished from his cell to begin the long, slow march to Bagumbayan, he took an above (depending on the source you use) recording the eggs to a dark corner of the cell. When the guards asked why he did this, Rizal was quoted as saying, "It's for the rats. Let them have a fiesta, too."

This is supposed to be a Christmas column, but it is heading toward gloom. To get back into the Christmas mood, I recalled another week to decorate the house with Christmas décor a week ago. Since our Christmas tree burned last year, nearly running a fire, we forgot to buy one this year. Instead, my children's daughter, we have transformed a fire tree, actually a plant, into a Christmas tree by placing it on the corner of the living room, hanging Christmas balls on its poor branches, and placing all the gifts under it. Of course, what Christmas tree effect is complete without the red and green poinsettia, that iconic Filipino Catholic.

In a letter to his sister Maria, the first he wrote to Germany in February 1886, he advised her to continue devotions that took home based on what he saw through "Spiritualism" and "Theosophy." He was, for example, in Europe it is the general feeling that it must be gay, attractive and pleasant. "He noted that the paintings and other ornaments hanging on the wall like colorful porcelain plates and the multitude (Santa) bottles whose lower part was made into flowers. He was also impressed by the grave-doubled lamentations on how to hang a plate on a wall with wire. He noted the type of pictures that adorn the European dining room and said, "The dining hall for Catholics, that is, the dwelling room, is decorated with pictures, porcelain plates and plates, for we have neither landscape paintings nor big pictures. White plates are used for decoration because they are confused with the meal."

I forgot you asked me recently what Rizal would have been had he survived? Bagumbayan. Based on the above, he would still be a dinner with expensive for his arm and cigarettes!

Comments are welcome at newsopinion@inquirer.com.ph

Painkillers

LAST MONTH, I GOT A TEXT FROM A PUBLICIST FRIEND who had to rush home to Cagayan because his mother was suffering from gastrointestinal bleeding. I responded by asking, "Is she taking MEFENAC?" She texted back, "Yes," and named the medicine, a very popular painkiller.

MEFENAC is analgesics or pain-killers. They are a boon, no doubt, helping us to beat the many aches and pains of life-

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

headaches, muscle pains, dysmenorrhea, arthritic pains. Many of these analgesics are also anti-inflammatory, which means they bring down fever. They're readily advertised and are available everywhere, even in sari-sari stores and at fire stations, so people tend to think they're very safe drugs, so much so that some people, especially the elderly, take them every day.

On Tuesday, the US Food and Drug Administration announced that it would require stronger warnings on the packaging of these medicines, in hopes of advising consumers, even doctors, about the use of these medicines. The United States annually reports 16,500 deaths because of these, notably the kinds, it might big warnings on packaging of painkillers, but better late than never. I'm hoping that Bureau of Food and Drugs takes action as well soon.

The business will probably mean an increase in the use of these medicines so I thought I should give more details on the risks of these medicines, and the precautions we can take.

NSAIDS

The first group of analgesics the FDA seems to be more concerned about right now is known as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS), which includes aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid, ASA), ibuprofen, naproxen, ketoprofen and mefenamic acid. All these are the generic names, the ones that appear on the labels is less. There are many different brand names from the analgesic ibuprofen to Advil and Neurofen.

These drugs can be very useful, in fact, have done aspirin is prescribed now as a daily medication to reduce the risks of strokes. But these drugs can cause gastrointestinal bleeding, with the risks much higher in people over the age of 65, people with a history of ulcers or stomach bleeding, and those who are taking anticoagulants or blood thinners.

Even if you don't have these risk factors, you should avoid taking these medicines on an empty stomach. Some of you may have experienced some gastrointestinal distress, and probably didn't know it came from the medicine.

Consider prescription NSAIDs only for short periods apart. People over 60 if they're already suffering from gastrointestinal bleeding until it becomes quite serious. In some cases, the bleeding can be so serious that surgery is needed. Note that gastrointestinal bleeding can cause deaths, with over 10 study people that for every 100,000 users of NSAIDs, there will be about 15 deaths from gastrointestinal bleeding.

Another problem with NSAIDs is that some people have an allergy to these medicines. If you've taken one of these medicines and suffered rashes and difficult breathing, then you should avoid any related drug. It's also healthy of medicines, so if you are allergic to, say aspirin, you're likely to react as well to ibuprofen.

Paracetamol

Some years back, the medical profession agreed to ban the use of aspirin in children because of its potential risk from a rare problem called Reye's syndrome. After the years over Reye's syndrome is rare, and that is not a reason to prescribe paracetamol, which is sold under dozens of different brand names. Locally, some of the most popular brand names include Biogesic, Tylenol, Tempra.

But paracetamol has its risks, too. A large overdose of paracetamol can cause liver failure. The risks are increased if taken together with alcohol, which further stresses our liver. Paracetamol can even cause death, and has been used deliberately to attempt suicide. The number of suicides as well as accidental paracetamol poisoning because such a problem that in 1998, Britain began to regulate the sale of paracetamol, limiting the number of tablets in each package.

The US FDA won't be following the British lead on retail packets, but their wise paracetamol packages to carry prominent warnings about the risk of liver failure. The packaging would also warn against combining paracetamol with three or more alcoholic drinks a day.

General precautions

Holiday headaches are going to shoot up this weekend. Whether from shopping or from hanging on alcohol, do take every precaution with these analgesics. Here are some general precautions you can take:

Look for the generic name of your medicines. We've forgotten that in the Philippines, drug manufacturers are required to put the generic names in a box above the brand names. If your headaches relieve bands you more medicine, look at the tiny print for the ingredients. Keep in mind, too, that in the Philippines, a brand under another name: acetaminophen.

Once you know what the ingredients are, you can take the needed precautions. With NSAIDs, it's avoiding the medicines if you're at risk for bleeding, or if you're suffering an allergic reaction to one of the NSAIDs. In the past 24 hours if you're over an elderly person or someone with ulcers, make sure you take the medicines with food.

For paracetamol, the general warning is not to take more than 1 gram of paracetamol at the same time (there usually are tablets of 500 mg each). In one day the recommended maximum dose is 4 grams.

Do not mix other paracetamol or NSAIDs with alcoholic drinks.

If you're taking several medicines, make sure you don't end up overdosing because of a duplication of active ingredients. For example, you might give you some 500 mg of paracetamol, but if you take Advil as well you're going to get another dose of paracetamol, together with the NSAID ibuprofen. Or if you take Ibuprin plus an anti-cold remedy like Neozep or Contrex, you'll again get two doses of paracetamol.

Are there alternatives to NSAIDs and paracetamol? There's the class of medicines known as COX-2 inhibitors. For arthritis, for these drugs also mean the same a low dose as ago with their particular medicine side effects.

There's just one small amount of painkillers going on many consumer guides on medicines now recommend using the lowest doses possible. Ask yourself, do you really need 500 mg of paracetamol, or will 250 mg do the trick?

I vividly see, when the analgesics are used to substitute for treatment of the cause of the pain. The pain are especially one's likely to do this, treating the details, for example, of even a dental problem that might end up in serious infection.

Remember, the most dramatic painkillers go through the entertainment industry. Actor Heath Ledger's tragic and horrifying example I found recently in one in his community was the use of methamine and with cocaine worst — to treat groin then. The cocaine must probably promised substance, while the methamine and caused some of the pain, but eventually ate me.

Real bullies are exposed

LETTERS

WHO IT MUST CONCERN: MAGANDANG tanong! Kung sino nga ba ang "I am tired of shouting the bully around the school yard" is referring to the activists who were protesting against the massive fraud and corruption in government, economic injustice, unemployment, killings and containment of civil liberties under the Arroyo regime?

Well, Filipinos are now say, "We are tired of the bully in Malacañang, the bullies and opportunists in the House of Representatives, Congress Secretary Ruiz Gonzales and all her supporters."

The crooked lawmakers had no qualms about railroading a resolution calling for Congress to convene as a constituent assembly. They endured democracy by shunning the principle of the rule of the majority. But certainly, by so doing, they have lost the respect of the people. They showed they do not have dignity. They have no right to represent the people. All they care about is to defend or blindly obey a President widely perceived to be a fake one. They defended her electoral victory which was marred with fraud and corruption. Now they want to hold to power along with GMA, because they want to acquire more power and to keep on enriching themselves out of people's misery and suffering.

The members of Congress who played the "members galore" are nothing but a gang of opportunists whose hobbies and moral virtues are no less questionable but consistency of a devotee to the leadership. They bully the people. They cheat the people. They swindle the people. Now they are trying to chase the people involved in the anti-Charter campaign. Charter change by switching Con-ass. But in the meantime they are pursuing Charter change through an unfeasible route: a constitutional convention. They are dead set on Charter change, the only way by which GMA will be able to maintain her self in power beyond 2010.

The shift to a parliamentary form of government will not resolve the political and economic crises that continue to plague our country as it recovers from Charter change will not alleviate the suffering of the people, will not ensure a genuine agrarian reform, will not give the workers a just and living wage, will not provide social services to the people and will not guarantee peace and order. But Charter change will surely serve the interests of the ruling elite and their representatives in the government.

While we do not believe that our present Constitution is perfect, we also do not believe that it can be made perfect under the present anti-democratic system. It is obsessed with perpetuating exploits in it to the to power. The people should wake now and remember the members of Congress who told one the public interest for 30 pieces of silver.

—NORMA F. DOLLAGA,
general secretary
Kaisahan ng mga Manggagawa sa Transportasyon
874 Edsa, Quezon City

Gonzales' 'Red' label for party-list representatives

I'D LIKE TO COMMENT ON THE suggestion of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales to tag terror leftists with the "Red" label. Gonzales obviously made the suggestion based on what he claimed as threats of the communists to make over the government.

Gonzales should know that back to the citizens' right to due process is the "presumption of innocence." It, indeed, there is evidence that warrants the prosecution of these persons in a competent court, why doesn't he or the government initiate the process? Isn't it more desperate if the authority so label anybody as a communist were given to Gonzales or to the government's law enforcement or security agencies (the police and military) instead of the court?

How could an officer of the government's security council, the police and the military hand down a fair and impartial judgment on persons whom they've long considered "enemies of the state" and against whom they have a deep hate? What protection could be assured for citizens given that label?

The government has a long history of labeling individuals or groups critical of it as communists. Even prestigious church organizations and media groups have not escaped such labeling, even though such an allegation has yet to be proved in a court of law.

Isn't Gonzales, with this suggestion, actually threatening to deprive citizens of their rights, or for that matter to kill democracy? Every individual has the constitutional right to run for public office or to represent his or her sector. But does Gonzales' proposal uphold and respect this right?

Gonzales would like to hang a 'homicidal' sword not only over the heads of the left-leaning party list representatives or groups but also over the heads of the progressive and democratic sectors in general. Such moves in the legislative body (whether or not these individuals or groups are known to act democratic and democratic principle of "due process" must still be up. Period.

—DAVID REYES,
davidreyes@abs-cbn.com

Whatever happened to sub judice rule?

THIS IS WITH REFERENCE TO NEIL CRUZ'S Dec. 6 column (wherein he quoted former Chief J. Makasiar, director of the Institute of International Studies of the SP Law Center) and Leonardo Bautista's Dec. 7 column pertaining to the pending motion for reconsideration in a mining case involving Apex Mining Co. et al. and the Southeast Mindanao Gold Mining Corp. (SMGMC). The case was decided on June 20, 2006.

The reason why Roque and Bautista persist in the arguments advocated by SMGMC, due to quotation in the case. The issues they raised have been presented and articulated by the company in its pleadings filed with the Court.

In the June 20 decision, the Court, among others, upheld President Macapagal-Arroyo's Proclamation No. 297 dated Nov. 22, 2002, proclaiming the disputed area a "mineral reservation" and "environmentally unsuitable."

Former, the Office of the Solicitor General whose stand in the case was upheld by the Court, also opposed SMGMC's motion for reconsideration of the decision, which is substantially more in favor of the government than of the Basilan Commercial Penal Mining Corp. and Apex Mining. The Basilan Commercial Penal Mining Cooperative and Apex Mining will not comment on the issue (because of the intimate of Cruz and Bautista out of respect to the Supreme Court), the latter is that a case that is sub judice should not be espoused in a forum other than the Court.

—RODOLFO U. SAPITUL
counsel for Basilan Commercial Penal Mining Cooperative, Sagasa City, Barangay Isabilan

Embarrassing decision

THE DECISION OF THE NATIONAL DISciplining Committee headed by Manuel Pepito to postpone the latest forensic to mid-January 2007 due to Typhoon Seniang baffled me and other Filipinos but also the participating foreigners. I can't help but agree with the millions who said that "only the stupid would believe" that it was the storm that prompted the summit's postponement. It was the looming political and "terror" storm that led the officials to reschedule the summit to next year.

It was bright and sunny here in Cebu on the day the Asian Heads of State supposed to open, and there were no signs of any weather disruption whatsoever in the days that followed. Weather broadcasters even noted that on the evening the delegates were supposed to arrive, the typhoon was moving the country's area of responsibility and they had advised the summit's organizing committees to push through with the original plan.

What does this say? The typhoon has just squandered a great opportunity. It tarnished our image here and abroad. It was an embarrassment.

A local government executive remarked the decision "was a sign of a weak government." A Japanese trade delegate in hushing said the decision was "extremely puzzling."

Hope we'll do better in January 2007.

—CATHERINE B.,
cat19rb@yahoo.com

Precious and noble

FR. JAMES REITER, HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC Church's Sacrament Office of the Mass Media, declared Judge Benjamin Pozon's decision, saying the latter disregarded the evidence that would have proven Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith's innocence. Reiter said, he didn't think Smith was guilty, the judge took every word of the prosecution as if it were gospel truth, but it did not give title of credence to the words of the defense. Reiter added that he reminded condemned Ruben Ecot, rape-killer Smith what the court had was a consensual sexual act.

Archbishop Oscar Cruz said, women should be taught that womanhood is precious and sacrifice, as it is not right for them to be becoming a sexual. Cruz added, men should not make the feminine appear cheap and commodity for it ing to be violated by men. (PDI, 12/6/06)

The two top-ranked Catholic leaders are right. The national and international infringes would have been avoided had the Zamboanga Jose court in the traditional "Filipina Maria Clara" image of refined womanhood by not had hopping with Ultra treatment without a chaperone. Being a seasoned 23-year-old col. lege graduate, she should have used her "common" by going home with her sister-compatriots who were abused.

—ELOCANE PATERNA,
Instituto de Solidaridad, Concepcion I, Marikina City

Open Invitation: **Join ANG KAPATIRAN PARTY**

A responsible and accountable political party, the Alliance for the Common Good, or **Ang Kapatiran** *for short, believes in* **"first things first" - that principles and platform must come before candidates. Accredited by the Commission on Elections on May 8, 2000, Ang Kapatiran** hereby publicly presents its founding principles and platform. In this way the people can know what **Ang Kapatiran** stands for and what it opposes. **Ang Kapatiran** is searching for servant-leaders who are willing to run in the coming national and local elections, adopt the principles and, once elected, implement the platform. **For the platform to become a reality, all its candidates must win the elections. Join Ang Kapatiran and make a difference. Help bear the cost of change.** You may reach us at No. 54 Katipunan Avenue, White Plains, Quezon City; by phone: 8719-1624, 632-8537, 635-2766, 726-5707, 911-0781, 911-2798; or by cell phone: 0918 908-3140, 0917 984-3369, 0917 682-6180, 0917 815-0355, 0927 344-7523, 0921-3681455, 0916-5111329, 0918 9056569; or by email at angkapatirangparty@yahoo.com. Please visit our website: www.angkapatiran.org.

ARTICLE II: Declaration of Principles:

Sections:

1. **Belief in Almighty God.**
2. **Life and Dignity of the Human Person.** We believe that every human life a sacred from conception to natural death, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether or not it enhances the life and dignity of the human person.
3. **Family, Community and Participation.** The human person is not only sacred but inherently social. The God given institutions of marriage and family are central and serve as the foundations for social life. They must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. Beyond the family, everyone has a right to participate in the wider society and a corresponding duty to work for the common good and the well-being of all.
4. **Rights and Responsibilities.** Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things that allow him/her to have a decent life – faith and family, food and shelter, health care and housing, education and employment. In society as a whole, those who exercise authority have a duty to respect fundamental rights of all persons. Likewise, all citizens have a duty to respect human rights and to fulfill their responsibilities to themselves, their families, to each other and to larger society.
5. **Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable.** The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. Our Christian faith calls on all of us to embrace the preferential option of the poor and vulnerable, to embody it in our lives, and to work to have it shape public policies and priorities.
6. **Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers.** The economy must serve people, not vice versa. Work is a form of continuing participation in God's act of creation. Work is a way of fulfilling part of our human potential given to us by God. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers, owners, and managers must be respected.
7. **Solidarity.** Because of the interdependence of all members of the human family around the globe, we have a moral responsibility to commit ourselves to the common good at all levels, in local communities, in our nation, and in the community of nations. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be.
8. **Care for God's Creation.** The world that God created has been entrusted to us, yet our use of it must be directed by God's plan for creation, not simply by our own benefit.
9. **Peace and Active Nonviolence.** The road to real liberation is not the way of violence, class struggle or hate. It is the way of love, brotherhood and peaceful solutions. To remove social ills, active nonviolence is our moral counterpart to the ideologies of today that espouse armed violence to change the status quo. It is likewise our foundation to the ideologies that institutionalize violence in order to preserve the status quo.

POLITICAL PLATFORM

Spiritual Dimension

1. Seek first the kingdom of God and His Righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.

Moral Dimension

2. Build a nation of character and promote the integral development of all Filipinos through character building, consistent ethic of life, good citizenship, basic political education, and values formation.
3. Dismantle the social structures that glorify sex and pornography, dishonesty, vice, moral relativism, materialism and hedonism, and replace them with structures of virtue, peace, responsibility, and achievement.
4. Abolish all forms of gambling whether run by the government or the private sector.
5. Abolish the death penalty.
6. End the use of torture to extract confession.
7. End violence or armed hopelessness and other institutions as well as in sports where main purpose is to inflict physical harm or violence on the opponent.
8. Actively promote responsible parenthood and natural family planning.
9. Reorient mass media towards fostering values that contribute to the formation of national commitment that is make-Filipino, make-kapwa, make-tao, at make-Pilipinas.

Social Dimension
(Multidimensional approach to peace and order):

10. Promote the culture of life, peace, active nonviolence, and progressive disarmament as a precondition to a consistent ethic of life.
11. Declare as contrary to public policy public morals, public interest, good customs, and the common good, the glamourization of gun, the culture of death and violence in the movies, television, video gram, radio, print media, billboards, posters, pro-gun stickers, gun exhibits and sale thereof in public places.
12. Make it a criminal offense for anyone but police officers or soldiers, a licensed private security, a uniform and on duty, to carry firearms or any other deadly weapons in public places.
13. Increase the penalty for illegal possession of firearms or violation of any firearms law to reclusion temporal (12 to 20 years without parole or pardon). Permanent disqualification from public office shall also be imposed if the violator is a public official.
14. The windows of motor vehicles should be of such transparency that it does not obscure the view of the interior of the motor vehicle. This requirement makes sense in light of the Supreme Court's ruling that the vehicle should not be searched nor its occupants subjected to bodily search.
15. Ban the selling and/or use of firearms and bullets in public malls and other public places. With prior permit and payment of rental fee, however, such exhibits and sale of firearms may be made in military or police camps.
16. Ban the manufacture, importation or sale of toy guns, air guns or replica of guns.
17. Ban the importation of firearms.
18. Ban the importation of guns except high powered guns for use by the police and the military.
19. Legalize and place under tight government control the local production and use of firearms for use by the police and the military as well as the civilians for sports and home protection. Manufacture and sale of firearms without authorization of the government shall be punishable with the same penalty for illegal possession of firearms as provided in Sec. 13 above.
20. In addition to the present requirements for permit to possess, the applicant must show to the authorities that he/she has a gun safety deposit box or home approved by the government.
21. Mandate the periodic public inventory, decommissioning and melting down of all confiscated guns for conversion into useful instruments.
22. Under a general amnesty, an individual may voluntarily surrender an unlicensed firearm with no questions asked and without incurring any criminal or civil liability. As an incentive, the government or the private sector may give financial rewards to those who take advantage of this amnesty. No other form of amnesty shall be allowed.
23. The same penalty for illegal possession of firearms shall be imposed on anyone found guilty of "planting evidence" to implicate others.
24. Actively promote a "drug-free" Philippines by formulating and implementing a comprehensive national strategy to eliminate the manufacture, distribution, trafficking, transshipment, sale and use of illegal drugs.

Foreign Policy (Good Governance)

25. Fulfill Isaiah's prophecy: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not raise sword against another nation, neither shall they learn for war again" (Justice society). to be a nation that is a friend to all and an enemy to none; pursue peace, based on love, justice, reconciliation, active nonviolence and progressive disarmament for all nations.

Social Dimension (Good Governance)

26. Abolish the "pork barrel" system in any form and regardless of its name.
27. Accord the highest priority in projects and programs for the underprivileged, the indigenous people, the homeless, the elderly, the prisoners, the disabled, the veterans and the youth, and support non-government organizations or communities whose programs and projects directly benefit the poor.
28. Make representation before the Supreme Court to bring about the speedy administration of justice.
29. Ensuring transparency and public accountability in government activities and transactions; reinforcing vigilance against graft and corruption; abuse of authority; and suicide in all three branches of the government and at all levels of bureaucracy; ensuring that public officials stand live within their means and their paychecks.
30. Enforce by administrative/criminal action failure by public officials to liquidate their cash advances within a reasonable period of time as may be prescribed by law or regulations.
31. Undertake a thorough review of the systems and procedures and guidelines on the procurement in all government institutions aimed at forestalling the commission of graft and corruption.
32. Promote a safe, clean, healthy and wholesome environment, particularly one waste management, promote stewardship as a way of life and promote the development of parks throughout the country.

Social Dimension (Economic Development)

33. Ensure rapid and sustained economic growth for double-poverty reduction and better quality of life for all by:
   - reviewing and rationalizing all outstanding debts and limiting future borrowings within our capacity to pay based on export earnings and remittances;
   - raising national saving rate to increase the investment rate and target term economic growth;
   - enhancing investments in human resource development, especially by strengthening education in the sciences, mathematics, engineering and English;
   - streamlining government bureaucracy to reduce unnecessary personnel expenditures (besides reducing corruption);
   - doing away with laws, rules and regulations that give government personnel, like the BIR and Customs the discretion to allow or disallow certain deductions or exemptions; etc.
   - providing agricultural development and attaining a high degree of self-sufficiency by encouraging productivity through the introduction of new technologies and improvement of infrastructure;
   - creating microfinance and other credit facilities for small enterprises by harnessing OFW remittances and other savings for economic development;
   - encouraging livelihood, formation of cooperatives and other small enterprises development programs to alleviate poverty;
   - pursuing or service the Agarao Reform Program;
   - promoting industrialization by encouraging the expansion of appropriate industries, including telecommunications and information technology to more effectively harness our God-given resources for the economic well-being of the people;
   - attaining a stable balance of trade by encouraging the development of new export products and improving existing ones; and
   - participating gradually and judiciously in the global economy, given that globalization is ongoing.

Social Dimension (Political Culture)

34. End the practice of appointing former military officer to the position of Secretary of National Defense based on the principle of civilian supremacy over the military.
35. The Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines shall have a fixed term of three (3) years regardless of the statutory age of retirement.
36. Active military and police personnel shall not be assigned as aides and security officers.
37. Disallow elected and appointed public officials from writing regular columns, acting in movies and television shows, acting as commentators or anchorpersons on radio and television, and appearing on TV and radio commercials and print advertisements and billboards.
38. End the unwholesome practice of setting up billboards in public places naming the public official responsible for the project.
39. Apply, to ensure the Constitutional ban against relatives of incumbent government officials up to the third degree from seeking public office simultaneously or succeeding the former, and to make it unlawful for any member of the Senate or the House of Representatives to run for another office without first resigning from his/her position six months before the elections.
40. To promote talented and loyal candidates behind-backed who are morally upright and competent and who subscribe to the founding principles and platform of the Party.
41. In addition to the Constitutional requirements to run for public office, candidates for President, Vice President, Senator and Congressman must possess a college or university degree.
42. Submit to the Filipino people proposed amendments to the Philippine Constitution consistent with the principles, values and objectives of the Party.

National Officers: Manolo K. Dayrit, Chairman, David Lim, Vice-Chairman, Maria E. Dingaka, President, Benny de Guzman, Vice-President-Treasurer, Nandy Pacheco, Secretary-General, Amading Astudillo, Deputy Secretary-General, Ting Enriquez, Deputy Secretary-General.

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Across the NATION

Bishop scores NPA use of land mines

SAN FRANCISCO, AGUSAN DEL SUR—THE land mine that exploded and killed a town police chief and his deputy on Wednesday afternoon was so powerful that it charred the victims' bodies and threw them 45 meters away, police said yesterday.

In this developed, Butuan Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos criticized the New People's Army (NPA) for using land mines, which, he said, was illegal and immoral.

"I strongly condemn killings using this kind of instrument," Pueblos told reporters here.

The incident occurred more than a year after a similar attack staged by the NPA wounded at least six soldiers in Jabonga, Agusan del Norte.

At in the 2005 attack, the NPA land mine explosion in San Jose that killed Insp. Enrico Bandoy and his deputy, SPO2 Expedition Polma, took place on the anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines was drawing near.

A follow-up report by the Agusan del Sur police said that Bandoy and Polma were riding on a motorcycle on their way home with some soldiers after securing a fiesta celebration when the land mine went off in Sitio Bayanihan in Barangay Bobuan, at around 2:45 p.m.

Eubisi, a police spokesperson said the government troops were responding to an emergency call when the explosion occurred.

Chief Insp. Mangandog Arab, operations chief of the provincial police, said the soldiers, who were aboard a military truck, and the other policemen, who were riding on another motorcycle, were able to flee as the rebels had failed to hit any of them.

Arab said the land mine that killed the two police officers could have actually been intended for the soldiers.

He said the rebels might have changed their mind and took Bandoy and Polma as their targets because the two had earlier led pursuit operations against them during an attack on a toll site.

Arab said investigators later recovered Bandoy's 9-mm pistol but the M-16 rifle of his deputy was believed to have been chartered into pieces along with the Honda XR200 motorcycle they were riding.

Bishop Pueblos said the NPA's continued use of land mines had become a "cause of concern" for the Church.

He said he would seek the NPA to stop using the device if he could establish contacts with them.

"But the problem now is that I don't know whom to talk to," Pueblos, a member of the Mediacommission, said. Chris E Pascual/Inquirer mindanao and Wandelito A. Caligan, Inquirer Mindanao

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International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), Philippines

• Ranked among the Best Government Securities Dealer
Bureau of Treasury, November 2006

• Ranked among the Best Banks in Asian Currency Bonds and Securities Trading
The Asset Magazine Benchmark Research Survey, October 2006

• 3rd Best Local Brokerage House in the Philippines – SB Equities, Inc
Asiamoney 2006 and 2005 Annual Brokers Poll

• Ranked among the Best Domestic FX Providers in the Philippines
Asiamoney FX Poll, September 2005 and 2006

• 2nd Best Local Cash Management Bank in the Philippines
Asiamoney Cash Management Poll, August 2006

• Best Commitment to Strong Dividend Payments
Finance Asia, Philippines' Best Managed Companies Poll, April 2006

• Most Active Trading Participants of the Exchange 2006
Philippine Dealing and Exchange Corporation (PDEX)

IABC

SECURITY BANK
Security you can bank on

Fratmen bring medical aid to typhoon survivors

By Marlon Ramos
Inquirer Southern Luzon

CHILDREN from Barangay Sugcampan in Legazpi City were among the beneficiaries of the two-day medical mission and relief operations conducted by the Pi Sigma Fraternity

LEGAZPI CITY—While cradling her 4-month-old son Gel during a stop for food in Irosin, Leonida Flores patiently waited for her turn to take the cramped health center in Barangay Bacolod here to have her baby checked up by a volunteer doctor from Manila.

She said that after being denuded in successive storms during the onslaught of Supertyphoon "Reming" two weeks ago, she and her four children had been suffering from colds and coughs.

Reming, one of the most destructive typhoons to hit the country in recent years, triggered the flow of volcanic mud and debris from the slopes of Mayon Volcano and buried communities around it.

More than 1,000 people were either killed or missing because of the mudslides.

"Because of his coughs, my baby would usually wake up into at night and cry until the wee hours. He will only stop until he gets tired of crying," the 28-year-old mother said.

Like most of their neighbors, Flores said they had not been getting proper medical attention since all the free medical checkups offered by the local government were only in evacuation centers, several kilometers from their houses.

"Instead of paying for the tricycle fare, we can use that money to buy food," she told the fraternity brothers.

Donations

Flores was at least seen where the needed, although medicines and vitamin capsules from members of the 58-fig ma Nu fraternity Alumni Association (PSNAA) who organized a medical mission and relief operations on Dec. 17-18.

"We are very thankful for your help. You were actually the first ones who visited us here for a medical mission," she told the volunteers.

Jay Demamay, PSNAA president, said Barangay was just one of the 11 barangays his group visited in six Albay towns that suffered the most from the devastation.

Aside from the medical services, Demamay and his group also brought more than 600 bags—each containing two kilos of rice, canned goods, candles, shampoo, toothpaste and other items—for the typhoon victims who had relocated to first aid stations.

They also donated more than 20 boxes of used clothing which they brought to a school evacuation center in Daraga.

"We really intended to help those families who have not been directly receiving aid because they already left the evacuation centers to start rebuilding their damaged homes," he said.

Aside from the capital city, fraternity members also provided relief items to the towns of Camalig, Daraga, Sto. Domingo, Bacacay and Tiwi.

Two-week preparation

Ruben Felipe, the program coordinator, said the group immediately contacted other alumni fraternity members after learning of the "unbelievable destruction" that Reming wrought in Albay.

"When we saw images of the victims and their grief over losing their loved ones on television, we felt the need to quickly mobilize our organization to help in whatever way we could," Felipe said.

In just 14 days, the fraternity was able to gather more than P300,000 cash and several boxes of medicines, food items and used clothes.

Demamay said the group also got in touch with several of their chapters in Albay for relief operations in the most affected areas.

He said he was surprised that their members in Sorsogon had already started giving food items and old clothes.

"We were challenged by the fact that while some of our members were themselves victims of the typhoon, it did not deter them from helping their neighbors," he said.

He said the fraternity intended to start their "Adopt A School" project early next year to help repair school buildings and link with other organizations to help in the relocation of families who lost their homes.

The Real Reasons Why Christ Came to this Earth

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Honeywell

Pollution Kills
2 Million People a Year
- World Health Organization

Honeywell Heads Call for Air Quality Improvement

In a worldwide statement last October 5, 2005, the World Health Organization (WHO) has concluded that pollution is a major cause of premature deaths of over 2 million people a year, thus the call for urgent concern and action to improve air quality especially in cities.

In fact, a joint study by the WHO and United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) has claimed Manila to be one of 20 cities where air pollution is posing increasingly serious health problems to its residents. Presence of such contaminants includes increased prevalence of asthma, allergies, pneumonia, lung cancer, chronic respiratory, circulatory and other systemic ailments among Filipino children and adults. The Department of Health (DOH) also disclosed that major pollution hotspots are concentrated along major roads and dense traffic networks, thus many people seek a place of safety such as their homes, to avoid outdoor air pollution.

Towards the struggle for clean air does not stop at home.

The sum is that indoor air pollution is often worse than outdoor air as pollutants trapp causes of the wood, insecticides, fabric equipment and appliances, outdoor cigarette dust and smoke that come in and stay indoors. A report made by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), states that indoor air pollution can be two to five times higher than levels outdoors, and ranked indoor air pollution as a top public health concern. This is so since an enclosed indoor environment causes a decrease in air quality as less ventilation occurs. In fact, airborne contaminants that can be harmful to one's health are trapped and even concealed in the room.

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Honeywell air cleaners as well as air conditioners are exclusively distributed by CYK Industries, Inc.

Floods put Bacolod, Talisay in calamity state

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—THE LOCAL governments of Bacolod and Talisay separately placed the adjoining cities in a state of calamity late Wednesday after floodwaters rising up to five feet inundated streets, buildings and houses and forced thousands to flee their homes.

The floods, caused by heavy rains that poured from 6 p.m. Tuesday to about three hours from midnight to 3 a.m. Wednesday.

The city councils of Bacolod and Talisay declared their cities to a state of calamity past 5 p.m. Wednesday.

The separate declarations would enable the city governments of Bacolod and Talisay to release emergency funds to assist the flood victims.

Bacolod Mayor Evelio Leonardia ordered the release of P5 million to assist the flood victims.

Talisay Mayor Rex Famoso said a state of calamity was declared in his city so funds could be used to aid 13 flood-hit barangays.

Bacolod Bishop Vicente Navarra also appealed for assistance. The Social Action Center of the Diocese of Bacolod has started gathering donations in goods and cash, he said.

In Bacolod City Bacolod-Murcia central, many cars in mall while a house floated down the road and hit stalled vehicles in Barangay Mandalagan, where the water rose to as high as five feet at the height of the heavy downpour.

Many parts of Bacolod City was flooded, affecting 28 of its 61 barangays.

Bacolod residents blamed the poor drainage as having caused the flooding.

About 60 patients of the Bacolod-City Lady of Mercy Specialty Hospital wards located in its basement had to be transferred to other floors after it route under four feet of floodwaters.

Equipment, including computers, and documents in their offices entombed over P1.8 million were also damaged, said Dr. Evangeline Johnson, hospital president and chief operating officer.

In Barangay Tangub, flooding also killed 51 fighting cocks worth thousands of pesos.

Rafael Abello said the water that entered his property rose to 7 feet causing his fighting cocks to drown.

He said the flooding was caused by the Department of Public Works and Highways' work on the road to Dunkit-Old Airport. The DPWH lowered a canal and replaced it with a small drainage system to save money, he said.

Abello said he expected the flooding in his area to keep worsening because of substandard work and he does not know when repairs be can take.

A Bacolod city hall report said the flood affected 2,691 families who were brought to nine evacuation centers, totally destroyed 106 houses and partially damaged 197 houses.

Inquirer Bacolod correspondent Joseph Almadovar said the provincial government immediately sent food assistance to Talisay City.

Landslide, flood alert up over E. Visayas

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE OFFICE of Civil Defense in Eastern Visayas yesterday directed all local governments in the region to activate their emergency response teams to the fight of the heavy rains that might result to landslide and flooding incidents.

For several days now, the region had been experiencing heavy downpour that has resulted to a landslide incident in the mining Agao-Agao, located town in Southern Leyte.

The regional office of the Department of Public Works and Highways had issued a public advisory on the temporary closure of the road section due to the landslide. It was closed for public use Sunday night.

Last February, seven persons died due to a landslide in Barangay Agao-Agao. On both ends of vehicles from Leyte province to Southern Leyte.

Rey Cuyno, administrator of Civil Defense (OCD) 8, said that due to the incessant rains, several rivers in the region, particularly located in the former provinces, are being closely monitored by their office for any possible flooding.

Alert

These rivers are the Cambiq and Guadart River (Basin) Leyte; Barren River (Eastern Samar); and Limasawan and Hinabaan Rivers (Southern Leyte).

"We advise people living in low lying areas and near mountain slopes of aforementioned river systems to be always on alert for any possible flash floods," Cuyno said.

The region was recently hit by Typhoon "Dennang" that killed nine persons—two each in Naval and Calbiran towns in Biliran; two in Leyte; Eastern Samar and one each from Babatngon, Biliran province, in Leyte and Masbate.

Benedicto Baran, 43, of district 4 Babatngon town was reported missing up to this time. Ten persons were injured due to the typhoon.

The typhoon displaced 61,889 families, consisting of 254,398 persons. Damage to infrastructure was placed at P56 million and P282 million for the agricultural sector.

Isabela power co-op asked to return P30M to consumers

ILAGAN, ISABELA—THE ENERGY Regulatory Commission has ordered the Isabela Power Cooperative II to return at least P30 million in overcharges to its consumers.

The order came after the ERC discovered that the final reduction rate it allowed was higher than the one provisionally granted."

The P30,013,809.17 total refundable amount was the difference between the provisional and final rates imposed by the cooperative from July 2004 to September 2005, the order said.

At least a million residential, commercial and industrial consumers of Isabela II stand to benefit from the refund. Of the total refundable amount, more than P23 million would be returned to residential consumers.

"With such an order, the body ensures consumer education and protection and promotes the competitive operations in the electricity market," ERC Chair Rodolfo Albano said.

Earlier, cooperative officials here were criticized after they illegally imposed an unauthorized power rate increase from November 2005 to June this year. Three cooperative officials were subpoenaed by the ERC.

Rafael Jacinto II, vice president of the Isabela Consumers Watch, assailed Isabela II officials following complaints from consumers regarding poor service, unwarranted policy and power disconnections, and excessive allowances and benefits of the cooperative's officials.

Nilkumar Ilagan Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon

CHRISTMAS VISIT
Also this week pose a scene of Santa Claus in front of Davao City Hall, where hundreds of "lumad" congregate from far-flung barangays every December to do caroling and solicit clothes from city dwellers.
AMY CORTEZ, ELDA QUINTOS-DEOCARIZA

Food, cash for work program for 'Reming' survivors

LEGAZPI CITY—AS RELIEF GOODS reach Albay, the province is giving way to rehabilitation, nongovernment organizations in Albay are taking their turn to help survivors by allowing families affected by Supertyphoon "Reming" to earn money and food in exchange for work.

With a ₱300,000 (P5.8 million)-funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Vision, an NGO focused on helping children, has enlisted villages in at least three towns in Albay: Oas, Daraga, Ilocano and Malilipot for work.

"We hire people to clear roads and build homes that were swept away by typhoons within their own communities," according to Sonia Gomez, World Vision's communication team.

A worker gets to earn P100 a day (P100 in cash and P100 worth of rice or at least 5 kilos).

The program, added Mollo, is designed to help families avoid "the dole-out style to get back on their feet, while waiting for gainful employment."

World Vision's target is to help 1,337 families with the food-for-work scheme.

"It'll run for two weeks and we started Thursday last week in Oas, Daraga," Mollo said.

Sheryl Vance, Development Foundation describes itself as a Christian child-focused, development, humanitarian and advocacy organization in the Philippines.

It has put up "child-friendly spaces" (CFS) in at least three barangays (Bacal, Binitayan and Lidong) in Daraga, Albay, one of the worst hit towns of flooding and mudflows from Mayon volcano on Nov. 29.

CFS is a psychosocial intervention for children who recently experienced traumatic experiences such as disasters.

CFS teams are put up where children can enjoy and feel safe while they play, sing, socialize, and learn from one another.

When mudslides buried the village of Guinsaugon in the town of St. Bernard, Southern Leyte in February 2006, World Vision put up CFS in two evacuation centers that enabled child survivors of the tragedy to go on with their lives. Zelma L. Reyes, Inquirer Southern Luzon

42 Pangasinan fishermen rescued; 68 more missing

ROUNDUP

By Gabriel Cardinoza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

DAGUPAN CITY—FORTYTWO more fishermen from five coastal towns of western Pangasinan and Zambales have been rescued from the South China Sea Wednesday, reducing the number of missing fishermen since Saturday to 68.

The Infanta government has declared a state of calamity and started distributing relief goods to 4,000 fishing refugees in Cato, where most of the fishermen live.

As of 11 a.m. Thursday, 42 fishermen from Infanta were still missing, four from Bolinao, five from Agno, 11 from Dasol, all in Pangasinan, and six from Iba, Orani, Zambales, according to Infanta police chief Insp. Randy Malayo.

He said the number included 13 additional missing fishermen from Bolinao, Agno, Dasol and Iba, Zone, Zambales.

Charlito Manlapaz, Cato barangay captain, said they needed the relief goods because fishermen in his village had temporarily stopped fishing.

"Many of them are afraid because this is the first time that this happened to them. That's why until now, the fishermen are afraid to go to the sea," he said.

He said 80 percent of his village's population subsist on fishing.

Bishops said search and rescue operations resumed on Thursday with two Army helicopters flying over the Scarborough Shoal, which is about 140 nautical miles from the shores of Infanta, Mayo said. Seven repeats that several fishermen were still there.

It was learned that the two Huey helicopters used in the search and rescue operations since Monday could only be airborne for two hours, reaching up to about 35 nautical miles from the shores.

Manlapaz said most of the fishermen were at a fishing ground about 60 to 120 nautical miles from Infanta.

The fishermen rescued on Wednesday were cousins Arnold, 16, and Abner Lopez. They were found by fishermen at about 5 p.m. dinging on their overturned boat about 48 miles off Panukulan Island in San Antonio, Zambales.

Manlapaz said the two were in a state of shock when they were brought to the Infanta health center.

"They were non-verbal. We can't talk to them. Their eyes were just open," he said.

He said he was told by the cousins that they lost their companion, Rustart Montes, when he was swept by strong waves as they removed their boat's outrigger after they encountered their boat to stop it from sinking.

"They were so hungry that they ate their own clothes," Manlapaz said.

He said the rescue of the fishermen has subsided residents' hopes that the missing fishermen may still be alive.

"We still hope that they will come home alive because the weather is good. And last night, we were encouraged that many rescued others," he said.

Malayo said no body has been recovered so far. But he said his office was confirming reports that a body was found in the shores of Sta. Rosas town in La Union.

The fishermen were swept by strong wind locally known as "northeast (north wind)" that whipped up giant waves at about midnight on Dec. 15 until the following day.

Roundup

Monkeys over killed

DAVAO CITY—The deputy mayor for Muslim Affairs in Malabang town, in Cotabato Valley province was shot dead on Valentine day night.

Provincial police chief Supt. Reuben Sarmiento identified the victim as a certain Sultan Alim, a resident of Mantapoli Poblacion, Malabang town.

The incident occurred at night and being eyed as a possible motive of the two unidentified assailants who killed the victim outside a gasoline station at about 8 p.m. Friday. Sarmiento ruled out politics, adding that police already have suspects, but refused to identify them pending their arrest.

Ronnie Jay Zambo, Inquirer Mindanao

NPA rebs slain in clash

GUIMBAL, SAMBOS CITY—Three New People's Army (NPA) rebels, including the secretary of the Far South Mindanao Region, were killed in an encounter with government forces in the forested areas of Columbio town, Sultan Kudarat last Friday. Col. Vic Pinto, 1000nd Army Brigade commander, said that the slain communist leader as Catalino Tacalinas alias Tatay Anay. Also killed are Rogelio Tamondong alias Pengel, the Main Regional Guerrilla Unit (MRGU) Intelligence leader, and Joy Lactiao, the MRGU medical team leader. Pinto said a platoon of the Army's 57th Infantry Battalion participating in a 36-hour combat operation attacked the NPA camp in Barangay Bakal Blas in Columbio. Government troops also recovered assorted firearms, homemade grenades, ammunition and medical supplies from the rebels' hideout since Dec. Pinto said the blazing rebels also carried with them four dead comrades.

Agustin Zosa and Nida Aguirre, Inquirer Mindanao

Donations for Pangasinan housing

DAGUPAN CITY— The Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. has donated P5 million to the city government for the construction of 78 additional houses at a Gomez Kalinga housing project in Barangay Bonuan Gumot town.

Herbert Ferrer, PLDT first vice president and concurrent president and chief executive officer of the Makati Medical Center, turned over the check to Mayor Benjamin Lim. The Gomez Kalinga housing project has thus provided houses to 714 families.

Gabriel Cardinoza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

A. Bautista

DR. ALBERTO "Bobi" Bautista, former University of the Philippines at Los Baños chancellor, professor and board chair of the Center for International Concerns Philippines died at past 5 p.m. yesterday at the National Kidney Institute. He was 68 years old. He had stint with the DTC was as a member of the Hacienda Pasig Fact-finding Commission that recommended several environmental measures for the Napo-Pasig river in Metro Manila. Survivors of his wake and interment will be announced later, according to the DTC.

Boxes with chocolates, checks thrown in Dagupan

BAGUIO CITY—POLICE HERE were puzzled about the recovery of two boxes containing government checks, packets of chocolates and Christmas cards that were thrown from a van passing through Barangay Bonuan Binloc here on Wednesday.

Police Chief Supt. Edgar Rubio said more than 100 checks were inside the two boxes with the label "Sayon Pena." The checks were in excess $40,000 each to individuals from different provinces, such as Cagayan and Cavite, he said.

Photographs of people, whom police believed were Japanese, were also found inside the boxes.

Rubio said the checks were issued by the Social Security System, Land Bank of the Philippines' Salt Resource Branch, the United Coconut Planters Bank and the Supreme Court.

Residents of Bonuan Binloc said they saw the van from here throwing out of the van on Wednesday dawn. They failed to note the van's plate number.

The residents, according to Rubio, retrieved the boxes and gave them to Councilor Chito Samson who owns a farm in the area.

Samson, in turn, turned over the boxes to the police.

The police were still conducting inventory of the boxes' contents.

Rubio said one check, for P500, was issued on Dec. 16 while another, worth P11,000, was issued on Dec. 18.

He said he has asked representatives of the concerned agencies to look at the checks.

Rubio said a representative from the Landbank here asked for a copy of a check to verify if this was genuine.

He said they were also checking information that the boxes belonged to a shipment consigned to a government mail truck in Central Luzon that was reportedly hijacked recently.

Rhonda Sotelo-Fortun, Inquirer Northern Luzon

STURDY PALI TREE
Bald trees like this 40-foot pili tree along the highway in Barangay Padang, Legazpi City are a common sight in Albay after powerful winds of Typhoon "Reming" blew its leaves away.

MILF not involved in clashes, says gov't

ZAMBOANGA CITY—THE GOVernment's ceasefire team said the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was not involved in the recent Maguindanao clashes as an organization.

Brig. Gen. Silverio Cuerva, chief of the government's Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH), however, admitted that the violence could have eventually dragged the MILF as a whole if it was not immediately addressed.

"We managed to patch up the differences. Had we not been able to address it, it could have escalated," Cuerva said.

At least 18 rebels were reportedly killed during clashes with militiamen in Ralph Recto, Maguindanao, on Dec. 15.

"I has nothing to do with the MNLF and the MILF. It's actually a family feud involving civilian volunteers and some members of the MILF," he said.

Lieut. Col. Julieto Alejo, spokesperson of the Army's 6th Infantry Division in Maguindanao, said the clashes were an offshoot of an MILF attack and the military was filling pressure.

Lanzi, Maj. Gen. Nicholas Piñeiro, 6th ID commander, said it was apparent that the reports reaching him were mixed up.

"The reports were mixed up. The firefight area was between the MILF and the AFP. It's between the CVO and some MILF members who have been maintaining long time grudges," he said.

Pineiro said he was happy that "despite so many incidents (in Maguindanao), the ceasefire remained in place."

But Pineiro expressed alarm over unsolved feuds in the province saying these could trigger more violence.

Alejo, meanwhile, accused the MILF of lacking control over its guerrillas. Adib Alipada and Charlie Sotiana, Inquirer Mindanao

DENR execs stop Baguio snow project

BAGUIO CITY—TOP ENVIRONment officials cancelled the summer capital's often-criticized "snow show" for Christmas following concerns raised on the snow's impact on pollution.

Environment Undersecretaries Manuel Gaerlan and Teresita Castillo were among the officials who disparaged the city government from dissecting downtown Baguio with manufactured snow until the Department of Environment and Natural Resources deemed the project, according to acting Mayor Reinaldo Bautista Jr.

Bautista attended but took the firm Better Air Quality workshop sponsored by the International Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where he was informed about the officials' cancellation of the show.

Baguio is one of 10 Asian cities piloting clean air management techniques offered by the initiative Clean Cities program.

Air quality reports from 2000 to 2005 place the highest concentration of pollution emitted by vehicles on Session Road, where most businesses are concentrated.

"We don't know what the final makeup of the snow machines would produce but we need to save they don't make the pollution worse," one of the officials said.

Bautista said he was baffled by the DENR's concern. He said machines that would manufacture snow would use rain water, and no chemical additives.

"I think they [Gaerlan and Castillo] were under the impression I was going to produce real snow by sending the clouds," Bautista told the Inquirer.

He said the local government has asked Gaerlan and Castillo to provide them with specific guidelines to determine how they would proceed.

The snow show requires snow manufacturing equipment and blowers installed strategically atop some of the city's tallest buildings.

The machines were donated by businessmen, "and will not cost the city a centavo," Bautista said.

He said he was awaiting the snow show will run for the Baguio residents' discomfort, but he admits the pollution emitted by city vehicles.

"It is unfortunate [the snow show] has not been well received. I intend to proceed with the project, even if it sucks after Christmas," he said. Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

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RESIDENTS of Barangay Manoi of Barangay Calolbigan in Nueva Valencia, Guimaras, are slowly recovering from the ill effects of the Petron oil spill in their community

Victims of Petron oil spill receive payments

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—JOAN MONTES AFTER A massive oil spill hit Guimaras province and devastated his livelihood, fisherman Eric Cadaña, 41, is looking forward to having a new fishing boat.

The Land Bank check amounting to ₱1,398 would be short of the estimated ₱40,000 for the new boat but this would be enough for the down payment.

"Oh, it could manage. This would be a new start for us," said Cadaña.

Francisco Palacios, 62, a shell gatherer, has a check of ₱1,488, part of which he will use to buy himself a pair of pants and shirt for Christmas.

Sandra Gumaca, 38, of Siwaway (Isiad) received ₱15,546. She plans to use the money to buy new fishing nets and spaghetti and bread for her family's noche buena (Christmas Eve feast).

"It's not much but it's better than getting nothing at all," said Gumaca.

Settlement for economic losses

They were among the 928 residents of Barangay Nosa who received yesterday compensation for economic losses incurred after the M/T Solar 1 sank in stormy seas off Guimaras on Aug. 11 and dumped more than 2.1 million liters of bunker fuel oil it was transporting for Petron Free Stream to Guimaras.

The International Oil Pollution Compensation (IOPC) Fund started giving out the checks yesterday at the Iloilo provincial capitol for claimants from Siwaway.

The fisherfolks received amounts ranging from ₱4,000 to ₱32,000 from the London-based intergovernmental agency that indemnifies losses resulting from oil spills.

The claimants signed a one-page agreement acknowledging the receipt of checks they could cash within 30 days and agreeing to waive any further court claims from the owners of Solar 1 related to oil spill damage.

IOPC Deputy Director Joe Nichols who supervised the processing said payments had been made to claimants from the towns of San Lorenzo and Jordan.

Claims of residents in Nueva Valencia and Buenavista would be settled in January and February, respectively.

Other claimants to follow

"We hope to finish the first round of payments by the first quarter of next year and then proceed to another round of processing and payments for the late claimants," Nichols told the Inquirer.

The IOPC is paying around US$3.4 million (₱185 million at ₱49.375=$1) for claims in claimants in the fishing sector, said Nichols.

This is compensation for 11,225 claimants in Guimaras, including 1,383 in San Lorenzo, 549 in Jordan, 1,350 in Siwaway, 1,220 in Nueva Valencia and 2,067 in Buenavista.

The amount excludes claims by those involved in the seaweed industry and fish pond owners, which are still being processed.

Nichols said IOPC had also released interim payments to 34 of the 54 claimants in the tourism industry, ranging from ₱1,000 to ₱350,000.

He said the IOPC would release more payments for resort owners in January and "until their business get back on their feet" because the assessment of losses of the affected owners was still continuing.

The peak season for tourism in Guimaras is between October and June.

The IOPC will also process and release compensation for affected residents in the towns of Oton, Tostopiton and Ajuy in Iloilo after the Guimaras claimants have been paid.

Lower than expected

The claimants said the compensation was below the amount they were expecting, but they said their claims would take longer if they asked for a higher compensation.

"We are thankful that we have received this amount even if it is not much," said 53-year-old Asa Bendaño.

Before the oil spill, Bendaño said she could sell 6 kilos of fish at ₱80 during a good day but almost nothing at the height of the oil spill in San Isidro village in Siwaway.

The seamen said they had returned to fishing but their catch was still not as it was before the largest disaster.

The oil spill has affected 3,437 families or 16,740 persons. It has also devastated Guimaras' rich marine life and affected tourist resorts.

Siphoning

Nichols said the planned removal of the remaining fuel from the sunken tanker would proceed in late February next year and was expected to last for 20 days.

The IOPC has signed a contract with a salvage firm for the removal of the remaining cargo from the sunken tanker 640 meters on the sea floor.

The operation is estimated to cost between 20-12 million depending on amount of oil left and duration of operation, said Nichols.

The IOPC has also submitted a contingency plan to the Coast Guard for pollution control in case anything wrong happens during the operation.

Aplus METRO
Edna Ester G. Dipasupil

Animal activists picket dolphin show in mall

'Cruelty' to captive performers cited

ANIMAL welfare advocates hold an inflatable dolphin at a picket protesting the treatment given to performers in a dolphin and sea lion entertainment show

By Jocelyn R. Uy

EMOTY SWIMMING THEM ON television, but don't get up close and personal.

Animal rights group gave this advice to the public as they picketed an Indonesian-based traveling dolphin show at the Old Mall of Asia in Pasay City yesterday to protest what they called "a cruel form of entertainment."

The show "Wonderful World of Dolphins," which runs until Jan. 7, features nine bottlenose dolphins, Rudi and Ingrid (who also have sex), Jolly and Jumbo, a baby and one team of sea lions.

Members of the Philippine Animal Welfare Society Earth Island Institute (EII), Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment and Agham Defense and Technology Advocates for the People) yesterday gave out pamphlets and presented videos aimed at enlightening the public about the "cruelties" that transpire before the dolphins are able to perform.

"What the show actually imparts to its audience is that it's okay to exploit animals for the sake of amusement," said Anna Cabrera, a PAWS director.

The dolphins were forced down and its partner killed in the process while trying to protect them, she added. "They jump through hoops, but this is not their natural behavior. What many don't know is that these dolphins are starved in order to obey their trainers and are subjected repeatedly to the stress that comes when they are moved from place to place."

Captive dolphins live up to a maximum of 20 years, compared to those in the wild who have a life span of 50 years. Those in captivity eventually turn blind because of the chlorinated water in pools where they are confined.

Trixie Concepcion of EII lamented that the Philippines did not have specific standards for the welfare of performing animals. The group had been lobbying with the Bureau of Animal Industry, the government agency tasked to implement the Animal Welfare Act, to adopt standards but "we have been ignored," she said. Similar shows have already been banned in the United States, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Nicaragua, Australia and New Zealand, the group pointed out.

Meanwhile, Noel Sanchez, assistant vice president of SM Investments Corp., said they were not aware of the "deeper issues" behind such shows which they feared scientists of the mall' property to be organized, Showcase said Diokno.

"They had government permits. We also put up a stockade strictly enough to guarantee the audience's safety," Sanchez said, adding that SM was not involved in the promotion of the show.

Jose Dignos, one of the organizers, who said they were not aware of the "real issues," said both EII and his company vowed this would be their "first and last animal show."

Artifacts' preservation sought in city ordinance

By DJ Yap

ARTIFACTS THAT LIE BURIED IN archeological sites in Quezon City may soon be preserved from the indiscriminate digging of construction crews working on road and infrastructure projects.

A proposed ordinance requires applicants for building permits and excavation permits in the city to secure an Archaeological Impact Assessment Certification from the National Museum before any digging or drilling starts.

To be called the "DC Archaeological Preservation Ordinance," the measure, now on third reading, shall apply only to sites yet to undergo excavation, and shall exclude areas where previous digging have been conducted.

It is intended to "protect and conserve pre-historic and historic artifacts and other archeological resources that could be found buried in areas to be affected by excavation work," said councilor Julius Cesareo, the main proponent.

Under the ordinance, any proposed excavation or building project that leads to the discovery or identification of an archeological site shall be held in abeyance until the artifacts are fully retrieved by experts.

Cultural, geological, historical and archeological materials showing evidence of prehistoric and historic events within the city boundaries shall be turned over to Quezon City Museum. The proposed ordinance also authorizes Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. to enter into an agreement with the National Museum, the Guild of Archeologists of the Philippines, and other government offices or private groups over the terms of the ordinance.

Tasked to administer the implementing rules and regulations are the city planning office, the engineering department, and the Environment Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

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LRT 1 & 2 to close early on Dec. 24, 31

By Rita T. Olchondra

THE MALABAN-BONIFACIO light rail transit (LRT 1) and Santolan-Recto LRT 2 will suspend operations earlier on Dec. 24 and Dec. 31.

Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA) administrator Atty. Bobby announced Thursday that on those two days, the last LRT 1 train from Baclaran to Monumento would be at 7:45 p.m. instead of 8:45 p.m. The return trip from Monumento to Baclaran will be 8:35 p.m. instead of 9:30 p.m.

LRT 2 will also come home earlier on Christmas Eve and run hours earlier on New Year's Eve. On Dec. 24, the last LRT 2 train will leave the Santolan station at 8:30 p.m. instead of 9:30 p.m., arriving in Recto before 9 p.m. The last trip from Recto will be at 9 p.m. instead of 10 p.m.

On Dec. 31, the last trip from Santolan station in Recto will be at 7:30 p.m., while the last trip from Recto will be at 8 p.m.

Bobby said data showed fewer people took the trains on Dec. 24 and Dec. 31, so it was not practical to maintain regular operations.

He added that both dates fall on a Sunday when fewer people took the trains. The schedule will only be for the dates mentioned and normal operations hours would resume promptly on Jan. 1.

Bobby added that only 11 trains or 33 coaches will operate on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve for line 1. On regular days, the line operates 30 coaches or around 20 trains. Line 2 will run 12 trains, but the waiting time will be longer, around seven to 10 minutes, instead of the usual three to four minutes. Apart from minimizing revenue losses, Bobby said the shorter schedule would also be good for the employees and facilities. Maintenance work will be done on trains parked at the depot in Pasay City.

2 more fires hit Metro

By Jocelyn R. Uy and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

A BIG FIRE THAT ATE UP A crowded neighborhood in Marcelo Green in Paranaque City for seven hours on Wednesday left 600 families homeless this Christmas.

The blaze, which started close to after 5:15 p.m., was traced to the house of Danny Rabanal on Sitio Salvacion, a one-hectare squatter colony in Barangay Tramo, said city fire marshal Supt. Danilo Ortiz.

According to witnesses, some children were playing with firecrackers in Rabanal's shanty before the fire incident. "The children could have lit the firecrackers on a bed that soon caught fire," Ortiz told the Inquirer yesterday.

"The fire spread quickly as we needed more fire trucks to help in putting it out," said Insp. Aida Mendoza, southern district police marshall said in an interview. The fire destroyed 300 houses, razing up P3 million in property when it was finally put out shortly before 1 a.m. yesterday.

In a separate incident, a fire razed a house in Pasig City the other night, destroying more than P200,000 worth of property.

Pasig Fire Station chief Fulgencio Rodrigues said the fire apparently broke out in the attic of the three-story house on Hillside Street in Barangay Oranbo.

Three children and their aunt were able to leave the house with no burns or injuries.

Makati completes ₱863M worth of infra projects

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE MAKATI CITY GOVERNMENT announced yesterday it completed some P863-million worth of infrastructure projects this year, even though some officials were allegedly hard-set of office because of allegations of anomaly.

City Hall said yesterday that the engineering department completed the construction and rehabilitation of 16 buildings and facilities, including the P181-million Makati General Post Office Station, the Olympic-quality Makati Aqua Sports Center, community halls in barangays Guadalupe Nuevo, Palanan and Bangkal, elementary and high school buildings in Barangay Olympia, high school buildings in Barangay Bangkal, and a park and barangay hall in Magallanes.

"The completion of our projects for the year 2006 is part of our continuing efforts to ensure growth and development in the country's premier urban center and to provide residents greater access to quality government facilities and efficient public services," Mayor Jejomar Binay said in a statement.

This year, city officials, including the mayor, Vice Mayor Ernesto Mercado and 10 councilors, were given suspension orders by Malacañang because of allegations that the city administration's projects were overpriced.

The Court of Appeals also granted the officials' appeal for a preliminary injunction. Malacañang's suspension order was put on hold until the appellate court could review the case's merits. The administrative case was filed by Binay's political adversary Roberto Brillantes.

Binay, his wife Elenita, and several city officials also faced a graft case at the Sandiganbayan based on Brillantes's complaints. The case against Binay was later dismissed, but charges against the others remained.

DID YOU KNOW

THE METRO Rail Transit 3 (MRT 3), a 16.8-kilometer rail system stretching from North Avenue, Quezon City to EDSA Extension in Pasay City, is one of the government's projects aimed at alleviating traffic in the metropolis. It has 13 stations located in the cities of Quezon, Pasay, Mandaluyong, Makati and Pasay. Trains stops are separately spaced 1.3 kilometers apart.

The MRT's inaugural ceremony before Rep. Ed. 1999. It was opened to the public the following day. People were given free rides from Dec. 30 to 31 without pay. Its daily ridership figures show there were around 538 million riders in 2005.

CyFI. Rodolfo Aquino Howard

Cherry Foodarama: 57 successful years of customer relations

Cherry Foodarama, the first supermarket in the Philippines, started as a sari-sari store. "My father-in-law owns a small sari-sari store. With four other owners then, they decided to start the business on a bigger scale," says Mrs. Hilda Chan, one of its partners today. At that time, they saw how groceries in the US look and they decided to adopt it. Fifty-seven years ago, the first Cherry Foodarama was established in Shaw Boulevard.

With three branches in the country, Shaw Boulevard, Antipolo and Greenhills, the company says no plans for expansion in the near future. They would rather concentrate on serving the customers they have known for so long. Being in the business for several years, Cherry Foodarama's main concern continues to be total customer satisfaction.

The success of Cherry Foodarama is attributed to its devoted customers. "There are families who up to the 4th generation do their grocery here," she exclaims. This supermarket also has a good number of loyal institutional clients. "People go to us because of conveniences," she says. The customers of Cherry Foodarama consider its staff as family. "When you do your grocery with us, you feel like you can talk to everybody," she says. "They are already used to us," she adds.

Cherry Foodarama has a complete range of products despite the size of their floor area compared to the hypermarkets. It started the one-stop-shop concept that other big malls followed suit. Chan believes that professionalism, honesty and openness to business drive them to achieve what they have now.

Despite the enormous shopping malls around the country, Chan believes that the low price of their goods is their competitive edge. They are able to do this by paying their suppliers on time. "We pay the suppliers through the bank and we get discounts when we pay on time," she explains. This is given back to the customers by pricing the items low.

With their tradition of personal relationships, it's no surprise that Cherry Foodarama partnered with a bank that is committed to serve its clients. Despite the constant changes in the market, Metrobank has continued to support its clients and aims to it that they continue to receive personal treatment. "My father-in-law has a personal account with Metrobank Araneta Lane. Metrobank became our financial partner in 1998," Chan recalls.

Over the years, clients have trusted Metrobank to deliver a complete range of financial services for all their banking needs and be the business partner they can truly depend on.

Metrobank proudly shares the vision and success of its clients-partners, both large and small. With Metrobank beside you, imagine the kind of partnership that can take you where you want to be.

Qaida's Zawahri threatens more attacks on West

DUBAI, AL-QAIDA NUMBER two Ayman al-Zawahri said in a video tape aired on Wednesday.

"If we are attacked or our land are shelled non-stop shedding you in your countries, God willing," Zawahri said in the tape aired by Al-Jazeera television.

"The formula for your safety is: You will not dream of security until we live it as a reality in Palestine and all Muslim countries," he said.

Al-Qaida, which carried out the Sept. 11 attacks on US cities, has repeatedly issued more outlaws on the United States.

Zawahri had threatened attacks in a videotape in June to avenge the killing of the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq.

"Our total wish is that this is just a broad list of historical grievances against a range of folks, with no specific threats," said a US intelligence official who spoke on condition of anonymity. The man it was issued in the holidays, which is when people get nervous about threats." In the tape, Zawahri denounced US President George W. Bush's argument that combating terrorism can guarantee security and said Washington sees terrorism as an evil from Iraq and Afghanistan, but was approaching the wrong parties.

He appealed to for calling on Washington to open a dialogue with insurgency leaders in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Both Democrats and Republicans are scrambling to find an exit from the disasters in Afghanistan and Iraq and are still fiddling with the same rash mentality and trying to negotiate with some sides to accuse your end but these sides can not offer you an escape and even attempts will only bring more failures.

"You are not negotiating with the real powers in the Muslim world and you appear to be heading towards a painful counsel of negotiations, after which you will have to talks to the real forces ," he said.

Urging persons to shift course in the corporate Iraq war, Bush is weighing the recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, which called for pulling back US combat troops by early 2006 and engaging Iran and Syria directly over Iraq.

Zawahri urged Islamic fighters to join the so-called Islamic State of Iraq, announced by an al-Qaida-led group in October.

"I urge the whole Muslim nation to support the fledgling state not to, God willing, the gateway for the liberation of Palestine and the central of the Islamic caliphate.

"I also urge all my mujahideen brothers in Iraq to join this blessed convoy to save the Iraq caliphate from the shackles of the crusaders and their agents, the traitors, who have sold their faith," the Egyptian militant said.

Zawahri took a swing at Iraqi Shiite Muslim leaders who he said opposed jihad against US-led forces in Iraq while they saw Lebanese Shiite guerrilla group Hezbollah's war with Israel this summer as sanctioned by Islam. Reuters

ONLY DAYS TO GO
A Christmas tree is seen in front of St. Peter's Basilica in St. Peter's Square as the Vatican Dec. 30. REUTERS

WORLDBRIEFS

Suicide bomber kills 13 Iraqi recruits

BAGHDAD—A suicide bomber killed 13 Iraqis queuing at a police recruitment centre to control Baghdad on Thursday, a media said, in the latest attack on civilian security forces in the war-torn capital. The bomber, wearing an explosive vest, struck at a private outside a police academy in the heart of the Iraqi capital that has been barred to vehicular traffic, security officials said. Ten police recruits were killed instantly and another three died of their injuries after being rushed to the al-Kindi hospital, a medical source said. AFP

S. Korean scientists plan to clone monkeys

SEOUL—South Korean scientists, undaunted by a scandal-torn part of the nation's cloning research, said Thursday they now plan to clone a monkey. Chang Kyu-hyun, of the state-funded Korea Research Institute for Bioscience and Biotechnology, said the team would next year launch a project to clone a monkey by the end of 2006. "Our cloning technologies are more advanced than other countries. If we have enough funds, we will be able to clone the monkey for the first time in the world," he said. "We should be in a hurry, as our foreign competitors are also working hard on monkey cloning by moving cores for reconstructive research, despite ethical debate." Chang, 43, said cloned monkeys would also speed up the development of stubborn diseases and revolutions for human diseases. Scientists say monkeys are closer to human biology than any other animals and would be more reliable in developing new treatments such as gene therapy or growing new organs using stem cells. AFP

EU nations settle on new fish catch cuts

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM—European Union fisheries ministers agreed Thursday on tougher catch quotas next year for cod and some other threatened species that sought to give the industry enough fishing opportunities to survive ban fears. After negotiations entered a third day early Thursday, the EU nations slapped with deep cut scientific advice in close some key cod fishing grounds and agreed on cuts which went up to 20 percent. The fishing grounds which left room west of Scotland and the Celtic Sea. There were cuts of up to 15 percent cuts in the other stocks. US Fisheries Commissioner Joe Borg said he promised to set up a drastic revision of a recovery program for cod, which had failed to make an impact over the last three years. "Cod is in bad shape in all EU waters," he said. AP

Europe to cut emissions

PARIS—IN THE FACE of still opposition from the airlines industry, the European Union moved Wednesday with plans to impose extra charges on foreign and domestic carriers this politics too much.

"We are showing our determination to fight climate change," said Europe's environment commissioner, Stavros Dimas, who formally announced the proposal in Brussels on Wednesday. "This is one way to persuade other countries to come along with us."

The rules, which would be legally binding, would apply to all flights within the bloc starting in 2011. Foreign carriers landing and taking off from here airports like those in Frankfurt, Germany; London, and Paris would be obliged to join the system the following year, if they exceed the emission limit after up years for airlines, potentially leading to higher airfares for travelers.

The proposal draws from the principles of an established system that Europe now uses to help combat global warming and steel emissions goals set forth under the Kyoto Protocol.

Under that plan, which has so far encountered problems, governments set goals for the carbon dioxide emissions of producers of power, cement, fuels, pulp and paper. If they exceed those goals companies must purchase allowances, or credits.

Many airlines supported by the US government, are working to block the European plans, calling their opposition and several habits. AFP

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The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Gonzalez

Italian at center of euthanasia debate dies

ROME—THE TERMINALLY ill Italian muscular dystrophy patient at the center of a debate on euthanasia died suddenly on Thursday, Italian media reported.

Only a day earlier, reports said 50-year-old Piergiorgio Welby should continue on life support because his death is not imminent.

Welby, who had been on life support since 1997, wrote an open letter to Italian President Giorgio Napolitano in September asking to be allowed to die, sparking intense debate on euthanasia in predominantly Catholic Italy.

Welby's death was announced on the all-news channel Sky TG24. The radio station of the Italian Radical Party (which had championed Welby's right to die, also carried the news, announced by the party's historic leader Marco Pannella.

Britain's state prosecutor on Tuesday challenged a civil court's refusal to recognize Welby's right to go off life support, saying the decision contained "flagrant contradictions," notably by holding that the patient can ask for his respirator to be shut off but that this right cannot be accorded by the courts.

Health Minister Livia Turco said Saturday that the court's decision confirmed "the need to urgently draw up regulations capable of clarifying the judicial framework of what we call measuring life by artificial means." The Higher Health Council (CSS), a consultative group reporting to the health ministry, said Wednesday: "Treatment for Piergiorgio Welby in particular the artificial respirator that is keeping him alive, does not constitute excessive care."

It added: "There is no imminent danger to the life" of the patient, who was unable to move anything but his eyes.

Muscular dystrophy is a degenerative genetic disease that progressively wastes muscle tissue. AFP

CAUSE Welby stands in front of a banner bearing the picture of her brother Piergiorgio during a vigil to show solidarity with Welby, Dec. 16. —

N. Korea nuke talks explore possible deal

BEIJING—NEGOTIATORS IN BEIJING WERE hoping for progress on Thursday on dismantling North Korea's nuclear weapons program but the North's preoccupation with US financial curbs against it could stumble a deal.

Washington's envoy to the talks, Christopher Hill, said US and North Korean negotiators were working out how to implement a September 2005 joint statement that promised aid to North Korea and security assurances in return for nuclear disarmament.

But a South Korean official said the North was refusing to budge without assurances on the US freeze of North Korean accounts in Macau's Banco Delta Asia, which Washington says was a "willing partner" through which Pyongyang engaged in counterfeiting and money-laundering.

"North Korea is refusing to discuss anything but BDA," Hill told reporters.

Hill said he was aiming for an agreement by Friday, offering hopes for progress in the talks that group the United States, the two Koreas, Russia, Japan and host China. The negotiations began on Monday, resuming after over a year's break.

They came about 10 weeks after North Korea held its first nuclear test, drawing international condemnation and UN sanctions backed even by China, its chief ally and provider.

"We do believe that there are some elements of that September agreement that should begin to get implemented over this week," Hill told reporters ahead of the fourth day of talks on Thursday. Reuters

US gives Sudan deadline on UN force

WASHINGTON—SUDAN MUST allow a team of UN personnel into Darfur and formally accept an international force for the area by the end of the year or face unspecified US reprisals next year, a US special envoy said on Wednesday.

Andrew Natsios, US President George W. Bush's special envoy for Sudan, told reporters he delivered the message to Sudanese President Lt. Gen. Omar Hassan al-Bashir during a visit to Khartoum this month.

US officials have stated growing frustration at Sudan's refusal to allow international troops to go to Darfur, where more than 200,000 people have been killed in three years of fighting that the United States says is genocide.

Natsios specifically asked that Sudan allow about 10 UN military and civilian personnel now in Khartoum to go to Darfur and that the government provide in writing its detailed agreement for more than 10,000 international troops to deploy as part of a hybrid force of UN and African Union peacekeepers.

While Natsios declined comment on what Washington might do if Sudan fails to act by yearend, the United States and others are considering options from travel bans on Sudanese officials and an arms freeze to imposing a no-fly zone in Darfur.

The Darfur conflict began when mostly non-Arab rebels took up arms in 2003, accusing Khartoum of marginalizing the arid region. Reuters

Turkmen president is dead

ASHGABAT—TURK... secretive authoritarian President Saparmurat Niyazov, who has ruled the gas-rich Central Asian country for 20 years, died early Thursday, two government officials said. He was 66.

"This sad event occurred early this morning. We are all in shock," a senior government official said.

Niyazov had been long rumored to be in poor health, but there was no immediate information about the cause of the reported death.

During his reign, Niyazov established an extraordinary cult of personality in which he was styled as Turkmenbashi, or Leader of all Turkmen. He allowed no political opposition or free media in this largely desert country of five million people.

Observers say Turkmenistan, a mostly Muslim nation with significant oil and gas resources, faces an uncertain future as there are no clear successors and traditional clan structures in the country have been marginalized.

Two weeks ago state media reported that Niyazov was to undergo an eye operation, but the details of the problem were kept under wraps.

On Oct. 29 a team of seven medical professionals headed by a Russian heart specialist carried out a regular check on the Turkmen leader and he was declared in good health.

But that month Niyazov issued a rare public appearance, saying: "I take medication three times a day because of heart illness." AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE
Sixers lose 12th straight /A28

SPORTS
Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

Fernando ousts Asiad ace Bibat

By Musong R. Cuerlo

STA. ROSA, LAGUNA—Unheralded Mark Fernando stunned the most fancied bet in the RP Amateur championship yesterday, ousting Asian Games bronze medalist Michael Bibat with a par on the last hole at the windswept The Country Club here.

The 23-year-old Fernando played the devilish 18th at perfection while Bibat drove left into the rough and needed three shots from there to get on to an unlikely outing to an evenly fought quarterfinal match.

The 5-up win overshadowed the impressive advance of young top seed Teodin Asuncion, the occasional pool swimmer who cleaned out a 2-and-1 decision over Nathan Reyson, younger brother of second ranked Jay, who also marched on.

Jay Reyson commended Asian Games teammate Marvin Dumandan, 2 and 1, after he had knocked out Edmund Jonathan Ho, 1 up, in the second round in the morning.

Fernando, a product of the Diamond Caddies' Open program, had his eyes locked on the 530-yard par-five hole where the tall and well-built Bibat knocked down a 20-foot putt for birdie.

JAY Reyson grimaces after missing a putt on No. 3 against Marvin Dumandan.

Both banked on every penny before Bibat blinked on the 18th while Fernando took his routine par.

"Maybe it was one of those days when I was the star value was blessed," Fernando, who trains under the auspices of the Philippine Amateur Golf Development Foundation, told the Inquirer in Filipino.

"That match could have gone either way" added the 23-year-old ex-caddie from Dumbocan-ga who helped Cantabong win the PAL Interclub earlier in the year.

Fernando, who earned sixth seeding in the match play-stage, had earlier dumped Taiwanese Chu Hung-li, 3 and 4, in the round of 16.

Keenan Yeung Ho-sen drained the other Final Four slot by scoring a 4-and-3 win of Kunal Bishera after eliminating Southwoods mainstay Miki Arjandas, 3-up in 20 holes in the morning.

A hangover soon also left standing in the semi-nis show with Malaysian Azal Johnni Abu Bakar advancing after a 4-and-2 victory over Melissa Ish-Hii Hazel Singapore.

The semifinal round starts today with the Jay Reyson-Fernando match at 7 a.m. followed by the Asuncion-Yeung confrontation right afterwards here.

Also Bahar clashes with world junior champion Jessie Arellano, a 2-and-1 winner over Crystal Ann Imperial, in the 7:16 a.m. pairing, before former RP Ladies winner Carmelenia Villaroman squares off with Jasmine dela Paz.

Villaroman, the veteran who won the stroke play Philippine Ladies in the late 1990s, posted a 3-up victory in 22 holes over Asian Games Anya Tangatan, while Dela Paz conquered Ting Ting Cu, 2 and 1.

The 36-hole finals will be held tomorrow.

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Toyota bets shine in PBL Showcase

By Jeannine W. Poyo

TOYOTA GETS BETS RUBBER the established league stars in the PBL Showcase last Wednesday at the Ultramar College Sports Center in Parañaque.

Little known guard Boy Guevarra displayed real star flair to beat out his veteran JC rival of Harbour Centre and Diane Iapitan of Hail and Silver for the slam dunk title.

Patrick Cabahug also bested several veterans to nab the three-point shootout.

Pure footed guard Aaron Castro of Super FCO entered a Toyota Otis sweep by leading it over the skills competition.

"This proves that the PBL has a lot of talents," league commissioner Chino Trinidad said during the awarding ceremony.

Guevarra clinched the slam dunk title with a one-handed jam after leaping over a standing boy. Diane outlasted Guevarra a perfect 50-point mark for a total of 98 in the two-round finals.

"I really trained hard for this act," the 6-foot-3 Guevarra said in Filipino.

An early favorite, Iand could only muster 97 points for second place. The high-leaping forward opened with an impressive 360-degree dunk, but settled for a less flashy one-handed reverse jam in the second round.

Serving as judges were members of the 1986 UAAP champion team: Ronnie Magsanoc, Eric Altamirano, Jerry Codiñera, Jojo Mendoza and Jerry Mendoza of the University of the Philippines.

In the three-point shootout, Cabahug emerged on top with 19 points. Jeff Chan of Magnolia collected 16 points, while Josh Urbiztondo of Santa Rosa (JS7) pulled up 15.

Cabahug also ruled the elimination round with 17 markers, beating Cebuanas Lhuillier Pres Rodolo and Ben Bona, Tide/Bolts veterans Jutel Capao and Al Magpayo and Harbour Centre shooter Jonathan Fernandez among others.

Guests also flashed their amazing 16 compositions in the skills competition by beating the 14-second clock by 1.1 seconds.

'Bantam Ben' laid to rest Dec. 26

AMOM: Legendary

LONG BEFORE BE-Norbeto gave golfers added distance off the tee, Ben Arda, diminutive at 5 feet 4, was already considered by many as a pocket rocket in launching golf balls to as far as the eye can see. He also was a monster at the fine touch and gimmie, making him a complete player.

Ben Benjamin Antonio Arda on June 13, 1929, he started his love affair with the royal game as a caddie. He saved up to win three Philippine Open titles in 1961, 1963, and 1979, and had the whole of Asia as his stomping ground to a career that spanned over four decades.

While two other Filipinos had won 10 Open victories from Arda, the Cebuano crowned his claim to fame by becoming the first Filipino, in 1979, to top the then Golf Circuit's Order of Merit. Larry Mowry had 13 10 Open crowns while Colombo Yagie, had six.

Last Dec. 19, Arda died of cardiac arrest at age 77, leaving behind his wife Lisabeth Ledesma, and children Ruby Beth, Jun, Virgilio, Milo, Hans, Cleine and Montel. He had two other children who passed before him, Virgie and Vivian. He remains lie in state at the Holy Trinity Memorial Chapel in Pasolinque. Interment is on Dec. 26 at 10 a.m. at the Loyola Memorial Park, also in Parañaque.

Known as the other "Bantam Ben," Arda spent many of his last remaining years tutoring young golfers at the Ayala Alabang Golf and Country Club.

"You (he) will always be fondly remembered by those of us who consider AAGCC our home... golfers, caddies and everyone else," said evening/maintenance "He will be sorely missed."

"There will never be another one like (he). He had so much to share about golf and shared them freely. This early we are thinking of staging an annual memorial tournament in his honor," said an reporter.

One side-dear to Arda's heart outside of the 10 Open was his victory in the Malaysian Open, in which his name was engraved in the Singapore Trophy.

Likewise, Arda started in not one but four aces in the cards for television: Shell's Wonderful World of Golf. He was ranged against the likes of Dow Finsterwald in 1966 at the Valley Golf Club, Frank Beard in 1968 at Mahtab Country Club in Illinois, and Roberto DeVincenzo and Orville Moody in 1969 at the London Hunt and Country Club in Canada. Later in 1980, he faced off against Billy Casper and Isao Aoki at the Manila Country Club.

With it was Arda, installed by the Philippine Sportswriters Association Inc. to Hall of Fame in 2004, who put the Philippines on to the world golfing map.

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Ozamiz bests Spring for 3rd straight crown

OZAMIZ CITY – OZAMIZ CITY'S TEAMWORK in defense in the last five minutes to hold off Spring Tagaytay 84-76, and bag an unprecedented third straight title in the 2006 Spring Cooking Oil MBC National Cup basketball tournament Wednesday at the Ozamiz Angel Medina St. gymnasium here.

After scoring a 71-70 come-from-behind win in Game 1, the Cocoa Mesias rapers of Eleazer Boy raiders Pangdeng fought the Cooking Oil Masters on equal footing in the first quarter before pulling away to sweep the best-of-three series.

Ozamiz silenced Spring Tagaytay in the final five minutes, with Billy Bernal and Marlon Bautista hitting the last eight points to seal the win before the ecstatic Ozamiz fans. Ozamiz won the last two conferences of the tournament.

Bautista was named MVP for the second time as he produced the crucial baskets to be endgame.

Bautista made the Mythical Five together with teammate Lee Gamotchon, Ozamiz's Peter Navos, Spring's Danny Cagulona and Norfolk Catania's Henry Fernandez.

Jeff Taganos of Spring was chosen Most Improved Player, Montalla Erwin's Wein Mateo named "Final of the Year" honoree and Ozamiz coach Albert Calvo earned his second straight Coach of the Conference award.

"Ozamiz proved it's the best team in the league," said MBC president Nathaniel "Nat" Padilla. "We will strive for other leaning work harder in the off-season so they look forward to a bigger and better season next year."

Padilla re-enters the Cooking Oil Masters with league MVP Mayor Sherbel Valentino.

The scores:

GAME 3: – Game 1: Ozamiz 87, Spring Tagaytay 76; Game 2: Spring Tagaytay 84, Ozamiz 76; Ozamiz 84, Spring Tagaytay 76

SPRING TAGAYTAY – Taganos 12, Bautista 11, Cagulona 9, Mateo 7, Fernandez 6, Navos 6, Bernal 5, Ramos 5, Ramirez 5, Ramos 5, Ramirez 5, Ramos 5, Ramirez

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SPORTS

Sixers lose 12th straight

SOARING, FALLING: High-flying New Jersey Nets swingman Vince Carter (top) elevates to the hoop against the Cleveland Cavaliers. Dirk Nowitzki, on the other hand, falls to the ground holding his ankle against the Seattle Supersonics, visiting veteran trio the Dallas Mavericks camp.

PHILADELPHIA—RUSHAMIE SINGH, scored 14 points and grabbed 11 rebounds, and Stephen Jackson had 20 points to lead the Indiana Pacers to a 101-93 win over Philadelphia on Wednesday, the last place 76ers' 12th straight loss.

O'Neal and Jackson took turns down the stretch making clutch baskets to hold off a spirited Sixers team playing their first game in more than 10 years without Iverson on the court.

Andre Iguodala and Kyle Korver each scored 20 points for the Sixers, a night after they traded Iverson to Denver for Andre Miller, Joe Smith and two 2007 first round picks. Iverson was inactive for his final six games in Philadelphia after a bitter split with the franchise that made him the No. 1 overall draft pick in 1996.

Allen Iverson will probably make his Denver debut Friday night at home against San Antonio. The Nuggets postponed their game Wednesday night against Phoenix because of a snowstorm.

No Iverson, and no Chris Webber again, either. Webber missed his third straight game because of a sprained right ankle.

The Sixers, who have lost 35 of 37 overall, are on their longest losing streak since they dropped 13 straight from Dec. 28, 1996, to Jan. 20, 1997. The Sixers also have dropped 16 in a row on the road.

In other NBA games, it was: Utah 112, Atlanta 106; Orlando 96, New Orleans 92; Golden State 96, Boston 95; New York 111, Charlotte 100; 2 OT: Milwaukee 128, Miami 99; San Antonio 108, Memphis 98; LA Lakers 111, Minnesota 94; New Jersey 113, Cleveland 105; Portland 88, Houston 87; Dallas 103, Seattle 93; Toronto 98, LA Clippers 96.

At Minneapolis, Vladimir Radmanovic and Maurice Evans combined for 36 points during a 35-2 run in the fourth quarter that stalled Los Angeles past Minnesota.

One night after shooting just 5-of-19 from the floor and leading out for the first time in more than a year in a loss to Chicago, Kobe Bryant scored 24 points on 10-of-17 shooting. But the Lakers trailed by 16 to start the fourth, and coach Phil Jackson sat Bryant for the final 6:40 minutes of the quarter.

The Timberwolves, especially Kevin Garnett, were stunned. After shooting 62 percent and playing nearly flawless offensive basketball through three quarters, they were outscored 34-7 in the lowest-scoring fourth quarter in Timberwolves history. AP

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Iverson debuts with Nuggets Friday vs streaking Suns

DENVER, COLORADO—ALLEN IVERSON says wait until at least Friday to make his debut for the Denver Nuggets, but he is confident the National Basketball Association's two top scorers can thrive together.

Iverson had planned to arrive here on Thursday for a practice session ahead of Wednesday's scheduled encounter but a blizzard struck the "Mile-High City" and closed the airport.

The snowstorm also forced postponement of Wednesday's scheduled game here between the Nuggets (14-9) and the Phoenix Suns, whose 11-game win streak is the NBA's best 14 seven-streaker.

The Philadelphia 76ers traded the superscorer guard to Denver on Tuesday in a deal that will unite him with Carmelo Anthony, the Nuggets' forward whose 31.6 points a game leads the NBA, with Iverson second at 31.2 points a game.

"I don't think it had to end this way, but that is the way it did end," Iverson told The Philadelphia Inquirer. "The organization did what was best for them and the trade was best for me. I just wish them well."

The 76ers are 5-20, having lost 11 games in a row.

"As we continued to lose, I didn't want to be a part of it," Iverson said. "I know we were capable of winning. But we stopped playing the way we were supposed to play and we were losing."

Iverson has not played since scoring 20 points in a loss to Chicago on Dec. 6 as the 76ers' season-worst early woes awoke crying to complete a trade deal.

"I had already gotten over it being that I sat out so long as I sat out," he said. "I definitely knew this was coming. I definitely felt it was time. After all that losing, everything else was frustrating. It was just time to go."

Anthony was benched a 15-game suspension by the NBA for throwing a punch during a late-game brawl on Saturday night at New York, as he will not return until a Jan. 20 game at Houston.

Until then, Iverson will be the main playmaker for the Nuggets, who will play host to Francois Forum: Philadelphia teammate on Jan. 3.

Critics say one basketball will not be enough to satisfy the egos of Iverson and Anthony, but the star guard exclaimed: "The Answer" is available—they will no more stuff.

"It'll be great," Iverson said. AFP

MGM Grand hotel hosts big De La Hoya-Mayweather tiff

LOS ANGELES—THE FIGHT ANTICIPATED: Oscar De La Hoya-Floyd Mayweather Jr. fever that figures to be one of boxing's richest ever will be held at MGM Grand in Las Vegas on May 5.

The designation of the site by Golden Boy Promotions was made Wednesday...the weeks after an announcement saying the pair would meet for De La Hoya's WBC super welterweight title in Las Vegas or Los Angeles.

The live gate could exceed the state of Nevada record of $28 million, which would better the $11.6 million generated by the Lennox Lewis vs Evander Holyfield rematch in 1999.

The 32-year-old De La Hoya previously said the fight would be the last to appear either his gloves (he won the only US boxer to win a gold medal in the 1992 Olympics. De La Hoya, 36-0 with 30 knockouts, is one of boxing's biggest draws despite fighting only sporadically in recent years.

DE LA HOYA

"This is what boxing is all about, and fighting. Floyd likes ourselves in the type of fight that truly gets me motivated to go through a hard training camp and make the sacrifices I have to make to be the best," De La Hoya said in a statement.

The 29-year-old Mayweather will be moving up in weight class. He is coming off a knockout win over Carlos Baldomir on Nov. 4 for the WBC welterweight title, raising his record to 37-0 with 24 knockouts. He won a bronze medal in the 1996 Olympics. AP

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BUSINESS

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Hot Holiday Gadgets

P SUN

RP exporters to lose US duty-free access

Bush signs law that removes benefits for developing nations

By Raoul W. Dumlao

PHILIPPINE EXPORTERS STAND TO LOSE TRADE BENEFITS from the United States because of recent changes Congress made to the US Generalized System of Preferences program for developing countries, according to the US Trade Representative's office.

Exporters, particularly makers of wire ... de-wiring harnesses, have expressed their concern over the report that US President George W. Bush on Wednesday signed a law that would remove duty-free benefits for imports under a special program that was meant to aid developing countries.

US trade officials said that the Philippines is one of six countries that would lose duty-free access to the US market for some key exports under the revamped US GSP program.

The other countries are Brazil, India, Venezuela, Thailand and Côte d'Ivoire.

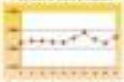
The United States Trade Representative yesterday explained that the Generalized System of Preferences program was being extended for two years until end-2008. This means that duty-free access for all products currently handling from the program would continue, except for those that

AP EXPORTERS B3

Currencies

Stock Market

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(For more market news, turn to Page B2)

Shares close 1.16% higher

RP may expect FDIs worth $3B in 2007

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES MAY EXPECT AT LEAST $3 billion worth of fresh foreign direct investments to come in next year as the government strives to improve the country's global competitiveness.

The $3 billion in projected FDI commitments for 2007 may even be considered a "conservative" estimate, Trade Secretary Peter Favila said at the sidelines of yesterday's journal economic briefing held by the government's economic managers.

Favila explained that, based on historical patterns, FDI flows to the country may be at least 10 percent each year.

Citing a recent study made by a foreign chamber of commerce, Favila said that the Philippines is even capable of attracting as much as $5 billion FDIs each year.

"Providing an enabling environment is the main factor," he said, noting that existing and infrastructures would be among the sectors that would benefit from the surge in foreign inflows.

Favila added that the rupees sector had likewise remained vibrant despite the dominday predictions by some analysts that the electronic sector would succumb to a contraction in global demand.

The rupee sector accounts for about 40 percent of the country's domestic economic output.

The Philippines slipped in the global competitiveness ranking by four notches to 126th out of 175 countries, according to the World Bank group's latest annual survey on ease in doing business.

"Doing Business 2007: How to Reform" is a joint research project of the World Bank and its private sector lending arm International Finance Corp. It indicated that the country did not implement enough reforms to enhance its business climate from 2005 up to April 2006. The country now lags behind Southeast Asian neighbors Thailand (18th), Malaysia (25th), Taiwan (37th) and even Vietnam (104th). Indonesia came in at 135th place.

The Philippines, for its part, has formed a national competitiveness task force to formulate a

(BF) B3

MPC sells stake in shipping firm

Company owned by Nenaco management taking over

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

METRO PACIFIC CORP. YESTERday approved the sale of its 40.7 percent stake in Negros Navigation Co. (Nenaco) to a newly registered holding firm owned by members of the shipping line's present management led by its chair and former fair Bonifacio Lanzi-Investor Ludlow G. Tagud Jr.

In a disclosure yesterday, MPC corporate information officer David Nieport said MPC would sell a total of 2.51 billion shares in Nenaco. MPC's stake in Nenaco will be reduced to 15.3 percent from 59 percent as it will remain a creditor of the company.

"If and when the buyer realizes any dividends or capital gains on the subject shares in the future, the registrant [MPC] will be entitled to 60-percent participation. This was a negotiated and mutually agreed consideration, which took into account, among others, the fact that Nenaco is currently under corporate rehabilitation," Nieport said.

Tagud, in the meantime, resigned from the MPC board of directors effective Dec. 15.

Tagud said the new owner intended to push ahead with Nenaco's rehabilitation, which is 60 percent acquired by the shipping line's creditors.

Nenaco requires roughly $3.6 million to purchase two new vessels next year under a re-fleeting program. It is selling four vessels this year and a boat is closing a deal for the sale of three vessels to Singaporean and Americans investors, sources said.

Since it filed for rehabilitation in 2006, Nenaco has trimmed its debts down to P1.2 billion from P3.2 billion.

In late 2004, MPC provided P200 million in cash support to Nenaco in order to quicken the implementation of its rehabilitation plan. This enabled Nenaco to repair critical liabilities, invest in necessary safety and maintenance equipment and improve operations. Its nine vessels (seven passenger and two dedicated cargo) have been deployed during peak travel periods.

Nenaco reported a net loss of P185.9 million in the first six months of 2006, up from P5 million in the same period in 2005.

BROADCAST INDUSTRY GOING MOBILE. PLDT and Smart chair Manuel V. Pangilinan views a mobile TV handset during an internal test conducted recently by MediaQuest Holdings and Smart Communications. Mobile TV is increasingly seen as a promising new service for mobile operators and an expansion area for TV broadcasters.

Capmark to acquire MJCI receivables

CAPMARK FINANCE USA Inc. (Capmark) to buy the receivables of commercial developer Manila Jockey Club Inc., consisting of its share in a 17-hectare residential project in Cainta, Rizal.

Receivables are current assets that represent an amount due to a company from the sale of goods and services on credit.

Peter Zagala, corporate information officer of the company, said the residential project, known as "Canyon Woods," was a joint venture between MJCI and Century Communities Corp.

The property is located within MJCI's San Lazaro Leisure Park, a gaming and leisure complex. Based on data from newsmag.com.ph.com, Capmark is a leading independent real estate financial company with three core businesses: lending and mortgage banking, investments and fund management, and services. Capmark operates in North America, Europe and Asia.

MJCI officials were not available to give further details about the transaction.

Tagala told the PSE, however, that proceeds from the assignment of the receivables would be used by MJCI to further develop its mixed-use commercial, residential, business and retail/lifestyle complex at the old San Lazaro Hippodrome in Sta. Cruz, Manila.

In 2005, MJCI partnered with Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) and its subsidiaries, Avida Land Corp. (ALC) and Community Innovations Inc. (CII) for the development of two prime housing communities dubbed Avida Towers San Lazaro and Cityland Condominium San Lazaro on the vicinity.

Avida Towers is a cluster of five condominium towers while Cityland Condominium is a 200-unit Mediterranean inspired condominium community. — Elizabeth L. Sanchez

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	Current Week Dec. 15, 2006	Last Week Dec. 15, 2006
Bond Fund - Peso	1.9151	1.9097
Managed Fund - Peso	1.9137	1.9026
Growth Fund - Peso	1.0077	1.0048
Bond Fund - US Dollar	1.3201	1.3151

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	Dec. 18, 2006	Dec. 11, 2006
Fixed Income Fund	1.234906	1.247479
Balanced Fund	1.196097	1.204387
Equity Fund	1.443865	1.442015

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RP ...

Principal B1

multisectoral agenda to shore up the country's ranking from the current bottom third of 175 countries.

In terms of starting a business, for instance, the government has committed to cut the number of days needed to complete the start-up process from 48 to 34, or par with some technologically more advanced countries like Germany and Japan. The number of tax payments will also be trimmed to 20 -- now from 59.

Meanwhile, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves reiterated the need for the government to spend more on infrastructure so he is able to draw in a bigger share of investment, pointing out that, He said he was hoping that congress would expedite the process of approving the national budget to resolve the gaps in infrastructure and social spending.

The 2007 public expenditure program prioritizes infrastructure and basic education.

Some P569 billion has been earmarked for road building, P62 billion for airport development, P6.4 billion for flood control, P5.5 billion for schools, P4.8 billion to support development in Muslim Mindanao, P3 billion to complete the national highway, P2 billion for the procurement of textbooks and instructional materials and P1.1 billion for the rehabilitation of irrigation systems.

PNOC woos partners for LNG terminal project

State-run firm also looking to invest in gas pipelines

By Abigail L. Ho

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL OIL CO. is seeking partners from the downstream side of business after finishing pre-feasibility studies for the construction of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in Batangas and two natural gas pipeline projects that have been validated for investments.

During a business conference hosted by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines last month, PNOC officer in charge Pedro Aquino Jr. invited interested oil companies in the region to partner with PNOC in undertaking the LNG terminal project and the Batangas-Manila (Batman-1) and Batangas-Manila (Batman-2) natural gas pipelines.

PNOC Exploration Corp.'s $400-million Batman-1 natural gas pipeline project will enable operations of the industrial, commercial, transport and residential sectors to tap the country's gas from the Malampaya Deep Water Gas-to-Power project in Palawan.

It is also cost to transport Malampaya gas to the decommissioned 650-megawatt Avion Thermal Power Plant, which President Macapagal-Arroyo had earlier ordered to convert to a gas-fired power facility.

Construction of the Batman-1 pipeline should have started early this year, with completion and operations expected by next year.

Despite the delay, Aquino said it would be good if PNOC could have received all comments from the Asian-1 participants in these projects, particularly how well a number of firms had expressed interest in undertaking projects outside their business core.

Use ATMs as debit cards, BancNet says

By Boris C. Bandoy

DON'T CARRY CASH, BANKS, ATM merchants offer merchant cards when shopping to ease inconveniences.

Alfredo Zafra Jr., executive vice president and chief operating officer of BancNet, the country's largest ATM consortium, gave this advice for card holders to avoid long queues at ATMs this Christmas season.

"By not carrying big amounts of cash with them, they will not have to worry about pickpockets, who proliferate during the holiday rush," said Zafra, adding however that merchant banks would be ready to meet the record demand for cash.

Based on BancNet data, ATM transactions peak just before major holidays.

This year, BancNet processed the most transactions on Dec. 15 at 849,353.

This was followed by April 12, or Holy Wednesday, just before the start of the four-day long Lenten weekend, at 743,898 transactions.

The third most transactions were recorded on Oct. 28 last year, a Friday and the eve of the long weekend leading to All Saints Day or 734,475 transactions.

$1-B Nonoc mines deal on brink of collapse

By Dixie L. Lucas

THE $1-BILLION DEAL TO REVIVE ONE OF Asia's largest nickel mines is on the brink of collapse after disagreements over valuation and share ownership prompted would-be Chinese investors to send senior team to review their offer.

At the same time, the Philippine Industrial Corp., which owns the mothballed nickel refinery and mining operations, said it had begun entertaining other prospective suitors for the project in Nonoc Island off Surigao City.

"We are open to other options and we have received several offers from Japanese companies," Philnico president Emeraldo Serrano Jr. said in a press briefing.

Serrano said Philnico had also received queries on the project from Russian and other Chinese firms.

"Our main concern is to protect the interests of our stakeholders, which is not only the stockholders of the company but also that of the people of the country, the government, and the local community," Serrano said.

Serrano's press conference was prompted by statements made by Socioeconomic Planning Sec. Rolando Neri on Wednesday criticizing Philnico for stalling the deal.

Neri said the firm diverged with the bidding position of Jinchuan Nonferrous Metals Corp., which is China's largest nickel mining group.

One sticky point is a disagreement over how much Philnico's $388-million obligation to the government would be worth since these are converted into shares in the rehabilitated firm.

On top of this, Neri said Philnico was also "asking for more and more concessions" and "more payments."

The Philnico chief countered this by saying that his group was less concerned over the valuation issues than by the conflicting signals sent by Jinchuan with its decision to commission yet another feasibility study for the Nonoc mines.

The decision, made by the Chinese firm recently, called for a new feasibility study to evaluate the project's financial and technical viability. It will be handled by a Chinese engineering firm and is expected to be completed by May 2005.

"They have been involved with this project for four years already," Serrano said. "They've even sent their people there. Why call for a feasibility study only now?"

He said the decision to reevaluate Nonoc raises viability issues after Jinchuan had already offered the government a 11.5-percent stake in the rehabilitated firm and $46-million upfront payment in exchange for its $300-million claim against Philnico.

"It doesn't sound rational to make an offer, and then support it with a study afterwards," he said.

Philnico now ready to entertain 'other suitors'

Banks get relief from BSP rule on securities booking

By Boris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS is set to offer banks a temporary relief from stiff restrictions on the marketing of foreign-denominated sovereign bonds.

This is to allow them to prepare for the scheduled imposition of tougher capital adequacy requirements.

Under a draft circular, the BSP would exempt for a limited period the foreign currency-denominated obligations government securities and BSP bonds kept by banks for the long haul from a "tainting" provision of Circular 475.

The order, issued in February 2003, requires financial institutions to classify their outstanding investments in long-dated foreign currency bonds issued by the government based on their intention in purchasing and holding the securities. This makes it difficult for banks to shed off the securities from one account to another, or liquidate them for speculative activities.

The hold-to-maturity or HTM portfolio is considered "tainted" when a financial institution sells a significant amount of these securities prior to maturity for reasons one considered permissible under the BSP regulations.

Banks with "tainted" HTM portfolios are required to reclassify the remaining securities in the portfolio to available-for-sale (AFS) securities, which are required to be marked-to-market. Marking securities to market the AFS account is done separately because of the provisioning requirements linked to market valuation.

The "tainted" banks are also prohibited from using the HTM account in entering repo transactions. However, only the tainted securities as of the effectivity date would be covered by the exemption, which is effective for 90 calendar days after the circular's effectivity.

Asean and the voiceless stakeholders

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

LAST DEC. 7-8, AT THE SAME time that the much publicized businessmen's conference on Asean was being held in Cebu, a parallel Alyansa Agribusiness-sponsored conference was being held in Quezon City. It included the thousands of fishermen and organizations nationwide, representing all major sectors in agriculture and fisheries in Asean, the sector has been practically voiceless.

Her sister Sen. Wigberto Tañada of the San Tuda Alliance read at the conference.

"The process of information sharing and consultation on regional integration with all the stakeholders are glaringly lacking if not absent despite the good declaration that Asean is building a community of caring and sharing societies... Many Filipinos are only beginning to have a comprehension of the grave, even level, if people in the 10 Asean countries begin to understand that they are Asean citizens and that they have the right to be heard."

Asean's importance

Asean has approximately 500 million people and produces an annual regional gross domestic product of $1 trillion. It is rapidly growing region surrounded by the dragon economies of Japan, Korea, China and India, with mammoth and New Zealand to south. Japan has promised that Asean be made the third-largest East Asian Free Trade Area (EAFTA), composed of the 10 Asean countries and three dragon economies. EAFTA will then have a collective GDP that will be much larger than that of North America and the European Union (EU).

However, the Asean, though formed almost 40 years ago in 1967, is only now formulating a comprehensive charter for approval by the Asean leaders in Cebu in January. This is to be the first time, led by Indonesia and the Philippines, to let year's WTO ministerial conference.

If the European Union can be scaled, so should Asean. This economic integration of the Asean region will clarify their unity with the rest of the Asean in fighting for the newly approved WTO categories of special Products and Special Safeguard Measures, which were included in doubt a few months ago. Such provisions, we can also hope, will ensure agricultural products can get protection when justified.

These same provisions should be implemented within the fifth CEPT Agreement, Dr. Leopoldo Arca Bengzon, president of the United Broiler Raisers Association, said at the conference. "Unless governments provides the necessary mechanisms, poultry should be a special product and not be subjected to the tariff reduction mandated by 2010, or we will perish."

Only when stakeholders like these find a voice in forum through an organizational structure change can we look forward to a truly progressive Asean community.

(The author is Agrimark chair. For questions and suggestions, email agrimark@philcom.com.ph or telefax 02-832 2122)

Commentary

Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
Manila

BEFORE YOU ON THE DIVISION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF [illegible] TO CONSIDER THE AFFIDAVIT OF [illegible] AND THE [illegible] AND OTHERS UNDER [illegible] BEING ACQUIRED FOR THE [illegible] OF [illegible] AND OTHERS.

PRESENT:

[illegible], Benjamin S., Chairman
[illegible] Resurreccion Z., Commissioner
[illegible], Florentino A. Jr., Commissioner
[illegible], Rufino S., Commissioner
[illegible], Rodolfo G., Commissioner
[illegible], Ruben T., Commissioner

Promulgated: 20 December 2004

RESOLUTION NO. 7788

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code and other election laws the Commission on Elections may deputize law enforcement agencies and instrumentalities of the government, including the Philippine National Police and to prescribe their duties and functions to ensure the holding of free, orderly, honest, peaceful, and credible elections on May 10, 2005;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Commission on Elections, by virtue of the powers vested in it by the Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code and other related election laws, has **RESOLVED** to deputize, as it hereby **RESOLVED**, to deputize the following law enforcement agencies and instrumentalities of the government, to perform specific duties relative to the conduct of the elections, as follows:

I. THE NATIONAL POLICE COMMISSION AND THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE

The Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the National Police Commission and its Commissioners, the Philippine National Police and its Director General, are hereby deputized in connection with the May 10, 2005 national and local elections, and as such, shall:

1. Effect no changes, during the election period from January 14, 2005 to June 13, 2005, in the assignments of regional commanders, provincial police directors and all PNP personnel under his command without the prior written permission of the Commission;
2. Direct the officers and enlisted personnel under his command to strictly observe the following duties and functions:
   a. Provide security to polling places, the members of the boards of election inspectors and the voters wherever the need arises therefore, or whenever the Commission through the Election Officer so requires;
   b. Provide security to COMELEC personnel and representatives performing duties and functions in connection with the elections whenever a request to this effect is made or when required by the Commission;
   c. Take steps to protect voters from threats, intimidation, coercion, harassment or reprisal;
   d. Enforce the following prohibited acts under Section 261 of the Omnibus Election Code:
      i. Paragraph (a) on appointment or use of special policemen, special agents, confidential agents or the like;
      ii. Paragraph (p) on possession of deadly weapons;
      iii. Paragraph (q) on carrying of firearms outside residence or place of business;
      iv. Paragraph (r) on the use of armored land vehicles, water or air craft;
      v. Paragraph (s), as amended by Section (b) of Republic Act No. 7166, on wearing of uniforms and bearing of arms;
      vi. Paragraph (t), as amended by Section (b) of Republic Act No. 7166, on policemen and provincial guards acting as bodyguards or security guards;
      vii. Paragraph (u) on reaction, strike forces or similar forces; and
      viii. Ban on dispensing, owning and taking of intoxicating liquor.
   e. Take effective measures to prevent members of civilian vigilante units and barangay tanods from engaging in partisan political activities or any act of terrorism, intimidation, coercion, harassment or reprisal.
   f. Take steps to prevent private security agencies from acting as private armies of any candidate or as campaigners for terrorists or violent acts against persons in connection with the May 14, 2007 national and local elections;
   g. Implement strictly the rules and regulations promulgated by the Commission to promotion, cities, municipalities and barangays which may be placed under COMELEC control;
   h. Enforce specific orders of the Commission to confiscate or tear down prohibited election propaganda or advertisement;
   i. Perform such other functions and duties or implement such other directives as the Commission may issue from time to time; and
   j. Render periodic reports on actions taken in accordance with this deputation.

2. THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

The National Bureau of Investigation, its Director and all agents under him are designated deputies for purposes of the May 10, 2007 national and local elections and, upon prior order from the Commission:

1. Deploy its agents to designated places in order to effectively carry out the objective of this resolution, furnishing the Commission with a list of said agents;
2. Direct its agents to arrest any person who violates the provisions of the Omnibus Election Code and other pertinent election laws and the Rules and Regulations promulgated by the Commission;
3. Report from time to time to the Commission actions taken by him or his agents pursuant to this resolution; and
4. Comply with the orders and directives of the Commission, which shall be transmitted through such means and directives from other sources, except the Supreme Court and those issued in habeas corpus proceedings.

3. THE BUREAU OF JAIL MANAGEMENT AND PENOLOGY

The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and its Director, are hereby designated deputies of the Commission to enforce the following provisions of the Omnibus Election Code:

"SEC. 261 (n). Illegal release of prisoners before and after election. The Director of the Bureau of Prisons, any provincial warden, the keeper of the jail or the person in charge of any municipal jail who releases any person lawfully held by virtue of the authority who illegally orders or allows any prisoner detained in the national penitentiary, or the provincial, city or municipal jail to leave the penitentiary or jail during the election and thirty days after the election. The municipal or city warden, the provincial warden, the keeper of the jail or the person or persons required by law to keep prisoners in their custody who put in force any subterfuge to circumvent the release of prisoners or detainees prisoners under their care. Detention prisoners must be categorized as such

and to comply with all orders, directives and resolutions, which the Commission may from time to time, promulgate.

PRECEDENCE OF COMELEC ORDERS

Orders issued by the Commission in connection with the May 14, 2007 national and local elections shall take precedence over and above the orders and directives issued by any other officer or agency of the Government.

However, nothing contained herein shall be construed as in any manner affecting or curtailing any enjoyment of the Constitutional powers of the President of the Philippines to constitute the direct the general peace-keeping functions of the Philippine National Police.

EFFECTIVITY

This Resolution shall take effect on the seventh (7th) day following the publication of at least two (2) daily newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

DISSEMINATION

The Executive Director shall furnish copies of this resolution to all the above-mentioned officials and/or departments, offices, or agencies, through their respective heads, the Regional Election Directors, the Provincial Election Supervisors and Election Officers / Officers-in-Charge, and coordinate with the above-named departments, offices or agencies for effective implementation thereof.

The Education and Information Department shall cause the publication of this Resolution in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation, and disseminate this resolution for the information of the public.

SO ORDERED.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS
Chairman

RESURRECCION Z. BORRA
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON, JR.
Commissioner

ROBERTO A. BEHRENDT
Commissioner

RENE V. SARMIENTO
Commissioner

MEHOMAC T. FORMEN
Commissioner

(Pub.: December 28, 2004)

Unilever plans to put up new deodorant manufacturing plant

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

UNILEVER PHILIPPINES PLANS TO PUT up a new deodorant manufacturing facility in Paco, Manila that will strengthen its foothold in the export market.

Outgoing Unilever chief executive Howard Bilton said in a briefing yesterday that the plant, expected to become operational by the third quarter of next year, would produce mainly roll-on deodorants, of which more than half would be sent abroad, particularly to the United States.

Bilton declined to provide details on the capacity and cost of the manufacturing plant, but said that it would allow Unilever Philippines to export three times as many deodorants once it starts operations.

Unilever Philippines currently exports 60 million deodorant sticks a year and about 10 million roll-ons.

Unilever Philippines is the biggest exporter of deodorants in the Unilever network, with products manufactured here sent to other parts of Asia, as well as the United States, South Africa and Europe.

The Philippines is also set to penetrate the Australian market.

"Our intention is to be able to sell all four units of deodorants, from stick-vitalize to sprays, roll-ons and sprays," Bilton said.

He said the Philippines was able to secure a big portion of deodorant exports because Filipinos have shown their competitive edge in producing products that are more difficult to manufacture, such as deodorants.

He added that the plants have more manufacturable, which means that the Philippines can quickly introduce new variants of deodorant compared to plants in other countries.

"The Philippines is also competitive in the market because of the good relationships with them," Bilton said.

Aside from increased production, Bilton said the new facility would enable Unilever to increase local content of the manufactured goods, from the current 30 percent.

Local plastics producers, he said, were becoming more competitive, meeting Unilever production standards.

"We are preparing the Philippines to become a truly global supplier of deodorants," he said.

Use of old budget spoils RP growth

Tight government spending stopped economy from growing as it should

By Michelle V. Remo

THE ECONOMY WOULD HAVE GROWN BY 5.6 percent this year and could easily meet the full-year growth target if only the government were allowed to operate using the 2006 expenditure program instead of functioning with a truncated 2005 budget, the National Economic and Development Authority said.

Augusto Santos, NEDA deputy director general, said that with the old budget program, the government was prevented from spending as much as it needed, as stated under the approved 2006 expenditure program. Tight government spending in turn prevented the economy from growing as it should.

The economy, as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), grew by 5.4 percent in January to September from a year ago. This was still short of the government's full-year target of 5.5 percent.

The government, therefore, needs to grow by 5.7 percent in the fourth quarter to attain the full-year GDP growth target of 5.5 percent.

GDP is the value of all goods and services produced in an economy in a given period.

Economic managers said they were hoping Congress would be able to pass the proposed national budget for 2007 so that the needed expenditures would be realized this time.

The Senate and the Lower House, however, failed to reconcile their two versions of the budget early this week. Economic managers are crossing their fingers, hoping that the legislators will be able to pass the budget program early next year.

The government has set an economic growth target of at least 5.7 percent for 2007. Santos said that to attain the target, the economic managers have assumed that the proposed budget for next year would be approved.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said a truncated budget would dash the expected GDP growth by 0.1 to 1 percentage point.

"The 2006 budget contains significant and quickly investments in social services and infrastructure that will help us achieve higher and sustainable economic growth and improve our people's lives," the economic managers yesterday said in a joint statement during their year-end economic briefing held at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

RP exporters . . .

From page B1

recorded new thresholds set under the new law.

The US is one of the advanced economies that implements a GSP aimed at creating trade with, and economic opportunities in, developing countries. Read Conclusion the US has brought by $25.2 billion worth of products, or 1.6 percent of its total imports through the GSP program.

Among those affected are Philippine exporters of ceiling harnesses, which have benefited from the law over the last five years. According to the GSPS, a product is eligible for special access to the US market subject to two "competitive need limitations."

The GSL has special access for a product of a certain country if the yearly trade of that product exceeds a certain level—for 2006, the threshold is $125 million. Also, goods are barred if the yearly trade of a product from a particular country reaches more than half the total US imports of that product.

Still, the current law allows the US President to grant a waiver to the GSLs if certain statutory conditions were met.

Ramon Vicente T. Rabaquig, director of the Bureau of International Trade Relations, said Philippine exports of ceiling harnesses has always exceeded that threshold.

"[The sector] has also been enjoying waivers for the past few years," Rabaquig said.

Unfortunately, the new law provides that the White House should reconsider any existing GSL waiver that has been in effect for at least five years if a GSP-eligible product from a certain country has a trade level that exceeds 150 percent of a yearly trade cap or surpasses 75 percent of a US import-end that product."

Available USITC data—which cover the January to October period—show that imports of Philippine ceiling harness had reached $125 million.

With a report from Reuters

BUSINESS

$5M in business deals forged

By Ronnel W. Domingo

SOME $5 MILLION WORTH OF BUSINESS deals between semiconductor and electronics manufacturers and suppliers were struck during a "reverse trade fair" attended by multinational and homegrown firms operating in Southeast Asia, the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions reported.

The trade show dubbed Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Electronics Business Opportunities Exhibition and Conference was held last Dec. 6 in Makati City amid talks among Asean leaders and senior officials on accelerating steps to make the bloc a seamless production unit.

The 48,000-square-meter Glorietta Open-air Mall in Ayala Center, Makati City, was organized by Ghent with the help of the Board of Investments, Asean Electronics Forum, and Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines Inc.

Some 70 electronics suppliers were matched about 200 manufacturers including Hitt Semiktor, Sharp Philippines, Speech Synergy, Texas Instruments, PSI Technologies Inc., Texas Pacific Corp., Prism Microelectronics Inc., CMN Materials Inc., Integrated Microelectronics Inc., Analog Devices Philippines Inc., Texas Automotive Philippines Inc. and Fujitsu Computer Products of the Philippines.

Client and Asia-Made-in-trade in the electronics sector reached some $80 billion in 2005.

Xstrata ups Tampakan stake

SYDNEY—XSTRATA PLC (LSE: XTA) on Thursday said it would exercise its option to acquire a majority stake in a mine project in the southern Philippines, potentially one of the largest copper and gold deposits in Southeast Asia.

The deposit in the Tampakan region of Mindanao is estimated to contain 11.6 million tons of copper and 14.6 million ounces of gold, according to Australia-listed Indophil Resources NL.

Indophil, which currently holds 95 percent of the deposit, has already spent A$27 million along with London-listed Xstrata on preliminary studies to identify the richness of the ore.

Xstrata said in a statement from its Australian office that it will become management control of the project on March 30, 2007.

It said the acquisition was an important step in the company's copper division growth strategy following its acquisition of Canada's Falconbridge Ltd. earlier this year.

"Providing mineral resource estimates at the project indicate the project should become a new long life copper asset for Xstrata," Claude Lamoureux, chief executive of Xstrata's copper division, said in the statement.

Under its option agreement with Indophil, Xstrata will take up a 62.5 percent stake in the project. It had until Dec. 31, 2007 to make a decision.

British prospector Tony Hobbins in the early 1990s helped identify the ore-rich Tampakan field for the then WMC Company of Australia before resigning and forming Indophil.

Indophil has promised thousands of jobs for the area's impoverished and ethnically divided communities if development work goes ahead.

Many of the communists of Christians, Muslims and a smaller number of animists in the area live in huts without water or electricity in the Southern Cotabato mine site.

Reuters

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BUSINESS Friday

Make your venture work in foreign lands

Filipino franchisers with outlets abroad list ways to succeed

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

IF A COMPANY CAN MAKE it in the Philippines, they will make it anywhere.

This is a view shared by many homegrown big and small companies alike are faced with a host of challenges in the Philippines, not least of which are the unabated influx of cheap goods from China and the entry of foreign competition with the liberalization of the retail industry.

Only the dense nations in this ever-changing Philippine retail landscape. The weak and the ill-prepared will fall by the wayside.

And for this, Philippine companies harboring ambitions of venturing into foreign shores need to be open-minded.

Because there, brand-new skills to crack a competitive arena, tried from test-runs (ideas that they have a good chance of duplicating their success in foreign climes, despite the unfamiliar market and the often strict rules, through franchising.

One of the marquee small and medium companies that have followed the Philippine multinationals' example of finding greener pastures is Chowking, the Chinese food arm of the 2GO Group of companies.

Chowking has 23 outlets in the United States, six in Dubai, United Arab Emirates and three in Indonesia.

"The US and Dubai outlets are doing well in terms of sales, the sales are increasing good profits and continue to increase in growth as the brand gains ground," says Chowking CEO Rafael dela Rosa. "We are now planning to open the next three stores in 2007 in Indonesia. The US and Dubai franchisees are also planning to open six and three more outlets, respectively."

Dela Rosa says Chowking did not have to dramatically alter its way of doing things to suit the foreign markets. The only difference is that "Chowking has to stock hard on establishing a brand presence, and this means getting the best store and working hard to put up more outlets."

For other Philippine companies to do just as well, he says the first step is to send out a team to the target countries to understand the markets, culture, legal requirements, logistics and the other factors to do so.

"One way to run many would be a good enough time allotment. For food business like ours, we should be able to configure products to the taste and profile and of course, the price that the food customers would love," he says.

A smaller company in a totally different field is also making its mark in overseas markets: That's Cebu-based Islands Souvenirs.

Since 1999, Islands Souvenirs has been giving foreign visitors a look into Filipinos' treasures and fruit with designs.

Islands Souvenirs has three shops in Okinawa, two in Singapore and one in Hawaii.

Islands Souvenirs president Joy Aldeguer says in an interview that for small and medium-scale companies to penetrate foreign markets, it is important to adjust to the target market because one formula for success does not fit all markets.

"In our case, we have used franchising and licensing to our main mode to penetrate certain areas. We've also learned that unless you're a multinational brand, you will have to establish a presence as if you are a start-up company," Aldeguer says.

"Also, getting a local partner, whether a franchisee, distributor or joint venture, will be highly critical to the success of

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He gave up working with Google for tea

Two years in the business and twenty-something knows he'll be big

By Soreen Bruno

WHEN RICHARD SANZ, 28, passed up the chance to work with Google, the world's largest search engine company, he had a bigger vision in mind.

"I just couldn't squander every-thing I had invested in Tea Square," says Sanz.

He knew focusing on his ven-ture strengthened it particularly since he was already gaining a market among the A, B and C crowd in his Research visit.

Two years since Tea Square started, Sanz has not been resting on his laurels, not even with 28 branches across the country (seven of which are company-owned). For him, raising the bar is the key to continued success. And the new market represented another opportunity.

"Nothing is final yet, but it's in the dreaming board. I saw a lot of opportunities in Hong Kong and other Asian countries," says Sanz.

So first his mind' scene's more business, but with a wife and daughter to feed, and a manager become, it was the answer. He set as such but his mother the word in his decision.

"When I sees living on my own with my wife and daughter, she would not grimmed not to conceal any help," says Sanz.

He was only 21 when he be-dicted a child, earning her re-

After spending two years in an IT firm, logging 13 hours of work a day Sanz said his wife decided it was time to consider a home option.

In early 2004, Sanz pooled P1,00,000 from his savings and a loan his Ateneo mom Consuelo (an Engineering graduate of De La Salle University) he named the business after a tool commonly used by engineering students—the T-square.

He advertised a resume paper to area malls. Daily Mailing Tours Center grew its roof. He started with a makeshift cart that sold iced tea, different flavored bread sticks, shadow fingers, cheese sticks and pasta in February 2004.

Between within August 2004, he got approval to put up tarts in Greenbelt and Glorietta.

At Tea Square, the tea is manually prepared and is in full view of the public.

"This is how we differ from commercial teas," says Sanz.

He also must start-ups. Sanz had to deal with adjustments and re-finements. On one occasion during the opening, Sanz had to be the one to pick up the tea.

"I was really dripping with sweat when I reached my car and called being mistaken for a delivery man," says Sanz.

Sanz also had to deal with comments from passing friends who thought what he was doing was out of line, he says.

He also had a hard time getting the supply of black and green tea from China because of his age.

"They won't take me seriously," says Sanz.

His first cart, he says, was so busy. The menu items had to change, the logo's symbol was so plain and the cups were without design. Targeting a niche market, Sanz knew he had to deliver his vision. graphics design on his own, browsing the Net and leafing through books.

He launched an aggressive sales pitch. He did beer sampling and lectured on green tea's health benefits, saying its sometimes can slow aging, fight cancer, heart disease and other illnesses, much better than red wine's antioxidant, anti-aging.

Over the past two years, Sanz had to adjust to changing consumer taste, varying food tariffs, and uneven demand. Tea Square redesigned its cans with flavours and Western food designs as well as added greens to cater to the old black ones. One can now enjoy lemon citrus green tea, plain green tea, honey lemon ginseng, blueberry bancos, refreshing mint, fresh calamansi, tropical escape, apples and cinnamon, and herbal exotic tea.

On his recruits, Sanz does promote and adopts Loyalties cards in which a customer gets free iced tea after earning nine points from previous purchases. Marketing involves displaying tea-inside posters at malls.

"We really intend to fish and cultivate them," says Sanz.

Last year, a marketing expert encouraged him to go into Franchising.

Sanz started studying on the requirement like documentation of product preparation, customer service, item delivery, order of items and opening-closing procedures.

The first franchisee signed a deal during a trade show in Megamall. So far 29 are a cart at Robinsons Metro East.

Tea Square franchising package includes cart, equipment, signages, franchise fee, training, uniform, materials and initial inventory.

Friends soon invested in Tea Square, making inroads to Cebu, Davao, Cagayan and Iloilo.

Company-owned outlets are at Alabang Town Center, Glorietta 4, Shangri-La, Mall of Asia, Robinsons Manila, Ilalonde Village and Better Living (Parañaque).

A slew of inquiries also prompted Sanz to put up a website (teasquare.com) and join ASI (Association of Filipino Franchisees Inc.).

The ASI are are encouraged to develop synergy among members. That system really rubs on you," says Sanz.

RICHARD SANZ

SME access to IGLF loans pushed

THE INDUSTRIAL GUARANTEE AND Loan Fund' (IGLF) recently designated the Small Enterprises Research and Development Foundation (Seedf) and the UP Institute for Small-Scale Industries (UP ISSI) to provide training and capability building services to improve access by small business borrowers to the various IGLF loan facilities.

This is under the IGLF grant for research and promotion of small and medium enterprises (SME) program.

Two groups are targeted to be trained: retail entrepreneurs in Metro and would be borrowers, and the bank loan officers who are the crucial frontline implementers of the IGLF loan program.

The capability enhancement series will be implemented in cooperation with the Development Bank of the Philippines, Bankers Association of the Philippines, Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines, Chamber of Thrift Banks, and various industry chambers and associations.

GINGERSNAPS goes to Bangkok and Singapore

Make your venture workin foreign lands

From page B1

your business," he adds.

Adequate says it is not as difficult to go international as is used to because of technology and globalization.

"Going international does not mean opening shop overseas," Adequate explains.

"The Internet, for instance, allows you to sell your products or services to the rest of the world from your desktop."

He also recommends that SMEs watch out for market trends they can capitalize on and establish as their niche market.

In Islands Investors' case, it saw the potential in providing merchandising expertise to tourism-oriented companies such as hotels, resorts, travel agencies and theme parks.

"We come up with unique, conservation merchandise for tourists. It is a niche that has not yet been tapped; plus we do not have to set up a store," he says. "Our strength will be in tourism-oriented concepts and not merchandise. There is an example of evolving your own business as we adjust to global trends."

Clothes retailer Gingersnaps is another company that drew from its strengths in the Philippines to conquer markets abroad.

It has four outlets in Bangkok and four in Singapore including its first boutique in the United Square mall.

"So far, sales and customer traffic have been steadily growing," says Gingersnaps' Grace Ignacio.

"More boutiques are set to open in other countries in the next months and years as the brand will continue to strive to be a global player in the children's and maternity fashion landscape. As of the moment, the brand has been getting good feedback from its customers in Bangkok and Singapore because of the high quality and up-to-date styles of the merchandise," she adds.

Aside from the Bangkok and Singapore ones, other outlets in United Square boutique, Gingersnaps merchandise is also distributed in select countries on a wholesale basis. The company continues to receive inquiries regarding international franchise from Hong Kong, the Middle East, and some part of the United States and Europe.

Coffee is another global trend and this works well for local coffee chain Figaro Coffee Corp.

Figaro has even dared to go to China to introduce the made-by-tea-drinking Chinese to the joys of drinking coffee.

Not just any coffee, but the coffee that comes from the Philippines.

Figaro currently has two stores in Shanghai, where the bulk of the economic development in the world's third biggest economy is concentrated, and is looking to open another store in Beijing in time for the summer Olympics in 2008.

It also has a store in Dubai and is exploring other markets, such as India and Indonesia, where it can plant the Figaro flag.

Sanz says getting the right partner is critical to a company's success overseas because of the unfamiliar market with its own idiosyncrasies.

Getting a partner, Sanz says, minimizes the risk of venturing into foreign territory. They count from their market knowledge and equity.

She adds that Figaro is going for the mainstream market, not just the overseas Filipino workers.

Sanz says it is crucial for SMEs to determine before they venture overseas whether they will just cater to a niche market—such as OFWs or the Filipino community—or go for the mainstream market.

KAMPERETA has outlets in Kuala Lumpur, Guam, Bahrain, Dubai and three in Jakarta.

DMB OF Channing's dress outlets in Indonesia

Lumpur, Malaysia, Guam, Bahrain and Dubai, United Arab Emirates and three in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Kamperets president Gonzales Regan says that before thinking of going overseas, a company must first prove itself in the major markets or the home country.

Regan cites the case of other companies in the business, especially in fashion, whose idea of conquering foreign soil despite of more successful companies.

He says such an attitude will see its foreign markets where competition will be tougher since it is entirely new ground.

"You must know your business first because that is the only way you are able it abroad. It will enable you to adapt to other markets," Regan says.

He says that in Kamperets case, it just needed to tweak its collections a bit and change the color selection to suit the foreign markets. Fortunately, its styles and basic concepts clicked with the other markets that are also looking for simple yet stylish clothes that fit well.

Regan encourages other companies to also venture abroad considering the various possibilities.

Expo makes last minute shopping easy

THE CHRISTMAS GIFTS EXPO 2006 WILL run from Dec. 20 to 23 (except Dec. 22) at the Megatrade Halls 2 and 3 of SM Megamall.

The 18-day event has one-of-a-kind gifts from over 180 vendors—accessories from fabric and flamboyant variety of companies like Novadesigns, BKDC Shells Export and Almar Shell Industries, home decor like acacia kitchen items by Global Export Products, wood cabinet by Seven Trees, Pinaculos soft frames by Floral Frames and Dreams, charcoal stoves by E.D. Engineering, bamboo cookware by E Bamboo Enterprises as well as hand-wood furniture from Cagayan Valley Region, Laguna and Palawan. Stir the handicraft lover, pick from any of the stalls by Anahaw Enterprises on natural and recycled paper creations by Paper and Arts.

Aside from toiletries and a variety of scent collections, there are hand-embroidered hamags and export overruns apparels in denim from Pinoy-made favorites like pants hamburg, women from Quezon are being sold.

For health-conscious shoppers, drop by at Health Hub to check out revolutionary wellness products and state of the art nutritional microscopy for health awareness.

There to date the two-day Collectible Christmas fair 2006 on Dec. 22 and Dec. 23. Toys, bargains and collectibles are up for the taking. A cash highlight to the fair is the Toys and Comics Collectibles Auction from 12 noon to 5 p.m. within its two days run. Anime Cosplay will be held on Dec. 23, 6 p.m.

IKLANDS Souvenirs has three shops in Delaware, two in Singapore and one in Macau.

Mandaue goes into retail

By Irene R. Sino Cruz
Reporter/Manila

MANDAUE CITY—ONCE KNOWN first solely as an industrial city, Mandaue City is now attracting investments in the retail trade and tourism industry.

A newly formed company called Golden Great Value Properties Inc. is eyeing the construction of a shopping mall at the Mandaue City-Cebu reclamation area.

Carlos Go, president of the mall developer Golden Great Value Properties Inc., says the company's investment for the Mackmall-168 project would reach P200 million.

The company plans to start construction of the 1.9-hectare mall in January 2007.

The construction phase would take six months while the tenants would take three months to do the finishing works, Go said.

While the 168 Mall in Manila does not have anything to do with the project, Go says, the concept is similar. Offering cheaper but quality products.

The initial plan was to construct a one and half level structure but the company is planning to expand it to two levels if it reaches agreement with potential tenants, such as call center and grocery, rent service agencies, he added.

Go says the company is negotiating with prospective partners but he refused to disclose any details.

Mandaue City Mayor Thadeo Ouano also hints that the Cebu Boardwalk project has started construction and is expected to be operational by the middle of 2007.

The project is owned and developed by IP Ura and Company.

The first phase, which includes the Esplanade, the amphitheater and the restaurant strip, will be turned over to tenants at the end of January 2007.

The second phase, which is composed of an upscale villas market and a health and wellness village, would be turned over for its use to the tenants in March.

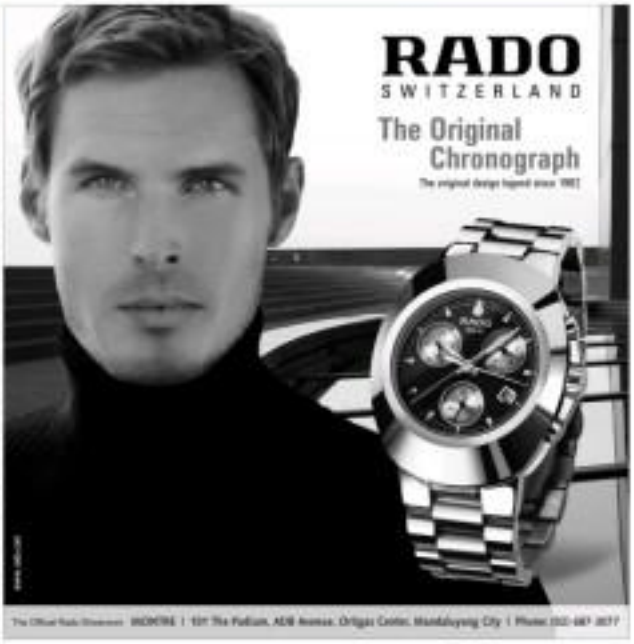
Ouano disclosed that another investor is looking into the possibility of investing in the Mandaue reclamation area.

He says a Hong Kong-based group has expressed interest in putting up a five-star hotel at the back of the mall site, the lot formerly leased by the Ouano group.

However, he says, Mandaue City is still working some details with the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (PAGCOR) for a possible casino franchise, which the HK group would like to acquire.

Ouano says the expansion of the Cebu International Convention Center (CICC) would enable the city to promote itself as a convention hub in Cebu.

"My city's management team, together with world renowned urban planners Nelsen and Associates, formulated a strategy to position the city as a preferred destination for international conventions and conventions," Ouano says during the formal launching of the city's new identity held recently.



BUSINESS Friday

State your complete address

By Eleanor Montenegro and Joel Tan-Torres
SGV & Co.

TAX-FILES

IN AN EFFORT TO TIGHTEN THE LEASH ON full public disclosure of corporate information, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) may have tightened the leash a little too tight.

The SEC has issued rules providing for stringent disclosure requirements for registration papers and the general information sheet (GIS). The GIS is required to be filed with the SEC every year, within 30 days from the date of the corporation's annual stockholders' meeting as stated in the corporation's by-laws.

SEC Memorandum Circular No. 2, Series of 2006 issued on Feb. 10, 2006, requires all corporations and partnerships applying for registration with the SEC to state the following in their articles of incorporation/partnership:

- Specific address of the principal office, which should include building number, street name, barangay, city or municipality.
- Specific residence address of each incorporator, stockholder, director, trustee or partner.

The circular also requires all corporations to state in their GIS the specific residence addresses of each stockholder, officer, director or trustee. The GIS is a document that serves as a report on material information regarding the corporation. Previously, stockholders, directors and officers were able to maintain confidentiality by merely indicating their office or business addresses in the GIS.

Disallowing a standard practice

The circular specifically states that "Metro Manila" will no longer be allowed to address of a corporation's or a partnership's principal office. This has been a standard practice for entities considering that their exact addresses may not yet be available at the time registration is made.

A review of the Corporation Code, however, shows that Section 14 in the contents of the Articles of Incorporation, merely requires that the articles of incorporation on its filed with the SEC should substantially state "the place where the principal office of the corporation is to be located, which must be within the Philippines." The Corporation Code does not require the disclosure of the corporation's exact principal office address.

In Section 21 of the Corporation Code which provided for the form of the articles of incorporation, the "Third" article merely states:

Third: That the principal office of the corporation is located in the City/Municipality of _____, Province of _____, Philippines.

It seems, therefore that the SEC's latest circular expands the requirements of the Corporation Code.

Because the Corporation Code only requires a substantial indication of the place where the corporation's principal office will be located, the previous and standard practice was to merely indicate "Metro Manila" as the location of the principal office. This practice, which was allowed by the SEC, had practical benefits.

The designation of "Metro Manila" as the principal office address enabled a corporation to transfer the principal office, where required by expansion of the business, anywhere within Metro Manila without having to go through the process of formally applying for an amendment of the articles of incorporation. Because of Circular No. 2, all corporations should now be registered office the circular's effectivity will now have to amend their articles every time they need to move principal office. This is a costly and time-consuming consequence of the new rules.

Issues in application

The seeming straightforwardness of the Circular belies certain questions regarding its application.

First, since the Circular speaks of the "articles of incorporation," it is not clear whether these rules apply to a branch of a foreign corporation applying for license to do business in the Philippines, whose by-laws or articles of incorporation are only registered in the country of incorporation of the parent company.

Second, the circular does not require existing corporations whose articles do not comply with the disclosure requirement to apply for amendment. Nevertheless, if a corporation voluntarily using "Metro Manila" as principal office location desires or needs to move its principal office the circular is silent as to whether the corporation is required to amend its articles of incorporation to reflect the specific address.

Third, the validity of designating "Metro Manila" as the location of the corporation's principal office seems supported by Section 51 of the Corporation Code which requires that "stockholders... meetings shall be held in the city or municipality where the principal office of the corporation is located, and if practicable in the principal office of the corporation, Provided, That Metro Manila shall be considered a city of municipality."

Consequences of noncompliance

An heir of incorporators/Partnership that do not comply with the new disclosure requirements will not be accepted by the SEC for processing.

GIS that do not make the proper disclosure will be considered as not filed and the corporations may face penalty fine for noncompliance with the SEC's reportorial rules. The Code is a graduated fine of P1,000 to a maximum of P1,000 to a maximum of P10,000 depending on the corporation's retained earnings based on the latest audited financial statements.

GOINGS ON

Manila Bay property named SM BayCity

SM INVESTMENTS CORP. SAID IT HAD christened its urban development project in front of the Manila Bay as "SM BayCity."

The property is a 60-hectare lot that has been earmarked for development into an all-inclusive business district. It is the home of the world's third largest mall, the SM Mall of Asia and the corporate offices of SM Investments and its subsidiaries.

SM BayCity also features an exhibition and convention center, office towers, a sports arena, a row of hotels facing the bay, and a commercial bay terminal.

Krispy Kreme opens in Megamall

AFTER THE OPENING OF ITS FLAGSHIP store in Boulevard Shopping Center at The Fort, Krispy Kreme, America's doughnut, opened its second store in Megamall yesterday in SM Megamall Bldg. B, upper ground floor.

With branches all over the US, Canada, Mexico, UK, Australia, Japan, Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Korea, Krispy Kreme is known for its fresh, hot doughnuts and for opening up hot lights.

Krispy Kreme not only offers its famous original glazed doughnuts and a variety of filled, cake and sprinkled doughnuts, but also a wide selection of coffee beverages made from high quality beans.

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LIFE-STYLED
Thelma Sioson San Juan

Selling fashion a tough act

THE PHILIPPINE FASHION DESIGN INDUSTRY is—quieter the competitors—like Preshrunk Macapagal-Arroyo. It is a lucky survivor.

That much was evident in 2006. Fashion designers found their clientele wherever they may be—in their shops or in malls. So in-stores, it's impressive how a bunch of fashion *mompreneurs*, fashionistas, designers opened their little stores at Independent Lifestyles at Richard's Puerto Plaza, with a range of superb swing merchandise—from vintage Prada bags to dresses, knitwear, shoes, accessories they themselves designed for affordable prices...and named Lifestyles into a regular destination of fashionistas.

Now, I checked it out two weeks ago, I almost went WWJD, from the office, but as I was among the many Buds. Ended from one mall to another by stylist Lois Espiritu, who has an eye for fun. I found Anthology by Noel Manapat, Miller Arruga, Chesbel Joson and Lois; Mari Dedicatoria's SOLO; Senen Soriano's Senen; Tina Navarro's Buzz (I could never have enough of her coats and bolero which I find so-hip on our editors, Stefanie Cabal and Tricha Ocsa); Happy David's Get Happy, and many more.

Finding their design niche and market is how young Filipino fashion designers and entrepreneurs manage to survive the tide of cheap China goods and Ukay-ukay brands.

The young designers don't need big names to sell their goods, just retail, buzz and friends of friends to buy their stuff. You can see the passion that goes into what they make and sell.

Beyond small and big retail, fashion designers somehow also get the chance this year to stage their collections before audiences that cut across age brackets, even if they barely had the canvas to shoulder production and marketing woes.

So what did they do to have a show? They looked for sponsors and patrons. Gone are the days when rich and well-placed patrons such as Imelda Cojuangco both PGFI's would bankroll a designer's gala show of fall collections. Gone are also the Five Ladies and Cabinet spouses who sponsored fashion shows to raise funds. Imelda Marcos' lingering keeps production associated to-this-day, using fashion collections to boost the regime's image. Ming Ramos even uses designers from the fusion ensemble to pit Chris Isidro against our own, with CNN's Gia Mancit Rossi in to score the design shows. After that it was all quiet on the fashion show front, with sporadic but heroic efforts of the likes of Richard Tuan (Fashion Week) breaking the silence.

Corporate branding

The last three years, big business took over the sponsorship of fashion shows.

Thus, fashion design became part of corporate branding, as big brands learned the most important marketing lesson of the 21st century: Lifestyle is the most efficient vehicle to get your market. Your market wants to buy a lifestyle, not just a product, so you're selling a lifestyle. Lifestyle becomes the product. And fashion design is the most prestigious way to do it.

The downside, however, is that the designer's fashion statement is subsumed to the corporate brand. The fashion designers end up merely interpreting the pitch of the brand; in many cases, with clumsy, if pitchy...results.

This was what made my experience in staging Bb.Pinoy—the Swiss and the Cuba different. When Samsung agreed to co-present the Swiss and the Cuba, it brought into our fashion vision—to give the designers the rare chance to showcase their design statement for the Olympiads and therefore 2007. It didn't interfere with the designers' fashion statements.

Why did we produced the fashion show? Because the media were there: our Metro magazine, our fleet's manpower, logistics and sales force, the ABS-CBN's vast media (which we used two years in a row). But most of all, it's because of the night-one I've had, still

ROLAND CU

SAMSUNG'S Pia Rogas and Angie Limbaco with Metro editor in chief Melanie Cursos (center) at Philippine Gida

ComicRelief

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2006

FOXTROT — BY BILL AMEND

A. LIPIN — BY EDI ABADA

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

PUGAD BABOY — BY PH JUNIOR

NUTS — BY PATRICK MCDONNELL

LOVEBOATS — BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

ATOMO AND WEBBY — BY LYRA GARCELLANO

DAVAO COMEDY — BY STEVEN PANALIGAN

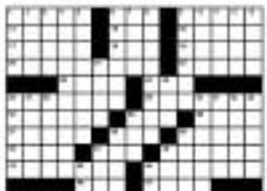
BIRD MACHINE — BY MARKO ABORA

HEKBOKOMIKS — BY JORGE TIQUIO

TULOOK — BY PAPILANG TATUM HILAMBILING

BEN — BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD



HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

5	3				6			
7					4			
				1		9		
			3				6	4
		9				5		
6	7				2			
		5		7				8
			2					
			5				3	2

Difficulty Level ★★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

9	1	7	5	3	8	2	6	4
2	8	5	9	4	6	1	7	3
6	3	4	7	1	2	5	8	9
7	5	1	2	8	3	9	4	6
3	4	9	6	5	7	8	2	1
8	2	6	4	9	1	7	3	5
1	9	3	8	6	4	2	5	7
4	7	8	1	2	5	6	9	3
5	6	2	3	7	9	4	1	8

© 2006 Conceptis Puzzles, Box 114, Pitts Passaic, NJ 07055

PLUS-SIZE can be stylish this Christmas. Great Wonder with Style offers festive tops in red brocade-cotton spandex and fuchsia empire cut with butterfly sleeves. Pair with wide-band stretch cotton or black stretch spandex gaucho pants. Check out their holiday collection and qualify for their bags promo up to Jan. 7, 2007. For a minimum purchase of P2,500 at any CWS regular items, you will get a free extra bag worth P550. CWS is available at the LG Robinson's Galleria and LG Landmark, Ayala Center, Makati.

Selling fashion a tough act

From page C1

here, with designers...chasing many, hirching, but most of all getting carried about their designs and careers. I believed in them. Until do... no matter the fluctuations of their capabilities.

Fun and faith—that's what gave birth to Metrowear five years ago. We've shared laughter and pain with the designers. Most of all, we have faith in them.

Ah, but never did I also imagine what it would be like going through the chaos of details in producing a show. To forget milk, the show was tough to call!

Amazingly this year, it wasn't tough to tell. Metrowear Gemaway agreed with the vision readily. We happened to be on the phone with Antonang's marketing brains Pete Roque and Jing-Jo Limbaco, eating in passing how Metrowear needed pitch through this year because we couldn't find funding, when the mall, yes, Metrowear could push through. There we sit down and he listened to what Philippine fashion design needed at this point. Designers must have the chance to make at least 10-15 dashes to put across a statement. They need of a showcase—a runway. Involve—to wear their stuff. Good for showcasing their talent, good for commitment.

Being back the regularity of fashion shows of the '70s and '80s which produced today's fashion greats.

Pete agreed and voiced that Sunsang had the products that bowed to fashion's demand for design, function and craft. Those were the lines. This glorious and the Bed mesh LCD TV. Thus were born the lines and foils.

Twenty-five designers unveiled their collections in the lines and foils—no mean feat for another breakthrough happened after Bernie's managers invited the designers to call their clothes at Bernie's.

That's completing the cycle. That was how the vision became real.

Filming Vogue

Streaking into the scene this week is Anna Wintour opening the doors of Vogue to TV—a first. But even in the filming of "The Devil Wears Prada" or "Sex in the City" (which had an episode of Vogue) never TV or movie crews welcomed with open arms into the Conde Nast office.

This time, however, after gaining (whether Wintour "25/20" I mean), fashion's power lady softened her stance about the medium. How she allowed a TV documentary group in (has she making of Vogue's fashion issue: the luxury as a phone divorce) in September mon. According to Women's Wear Daily, the documentary begins in January.

(That's how he silenced they work on the same!)

GOINGS-ON

Triple treats for 'barkada'

SIZE CELLULAR GIVES YOU AND TWO OF YOUR friends the chance to win cash or cars with its triple treats Prize Raindrop promo. Until Jan. 15, you can each win a million pesos in cash or a brand-new Mazda3 or Hilux at make-up Canon Powershot Digital Cameras, Sony Ericsson W900 and K790 cell phones. Canon Mini DV Camcorders, IBM Thinkcentre personal computers, Samsung LCD 32" slim screen televisions and Samsung Home Theater Systems with 40" LCD screens. Find the nearest Sun shop in your area or call the Sun Mobile hotline at 2000333 or 333 toll-free. You may also logon to www.sunonline.com.ph for more details.

KIDS' FAIR. Sta. Lucia East Department Store (SLEDS) and Planet Toys are holding a fair until Dec. 31. Shoppers get up to 50 percent discounts on selected children's items, including apparel, shoes, bags, toys and accessories. Santa Claus is SLE Cav. 24-25. Get a free souvenir photo with Santa Claus 3-5 p.m., Dec. 24, by presenting a P500 single purchase receipt from SLEDS.

PROMO. Starwood Robinson's Malls Foodcourt on 6 Jan. 14 and get a chance to win up to P5 million. Include prizes in Robinson's Malls and Greenhills's "Wagpamasko sa P5 Milyon Mo," Tenants whose within field Nov. 15, 21 and 29 and Jan. 5. Grand draw is Jan. 19. Call 9808151/9808180 for cell 180 or 727.

LONGEVE. Yes for Eastern University Dasmariñas center stage its "Paro Park Presents," Dec. 22, 6 p.m. at Paro Park, San Monolino, Manila.

KOREAN LANGUAGE COURSE. The Department of Tourism is offering a Basic Korean Language Course 6-8 p.m., Monday-Friday, Jan. 8-March 9. Registrations, which ends today, is held at the Standards Development Division, Room 200, DOT Bldg., T.M. Kalaw St., Ermita, Manila. Call 5251788/5251 loc. 1736/5251511 local 183 and 178.

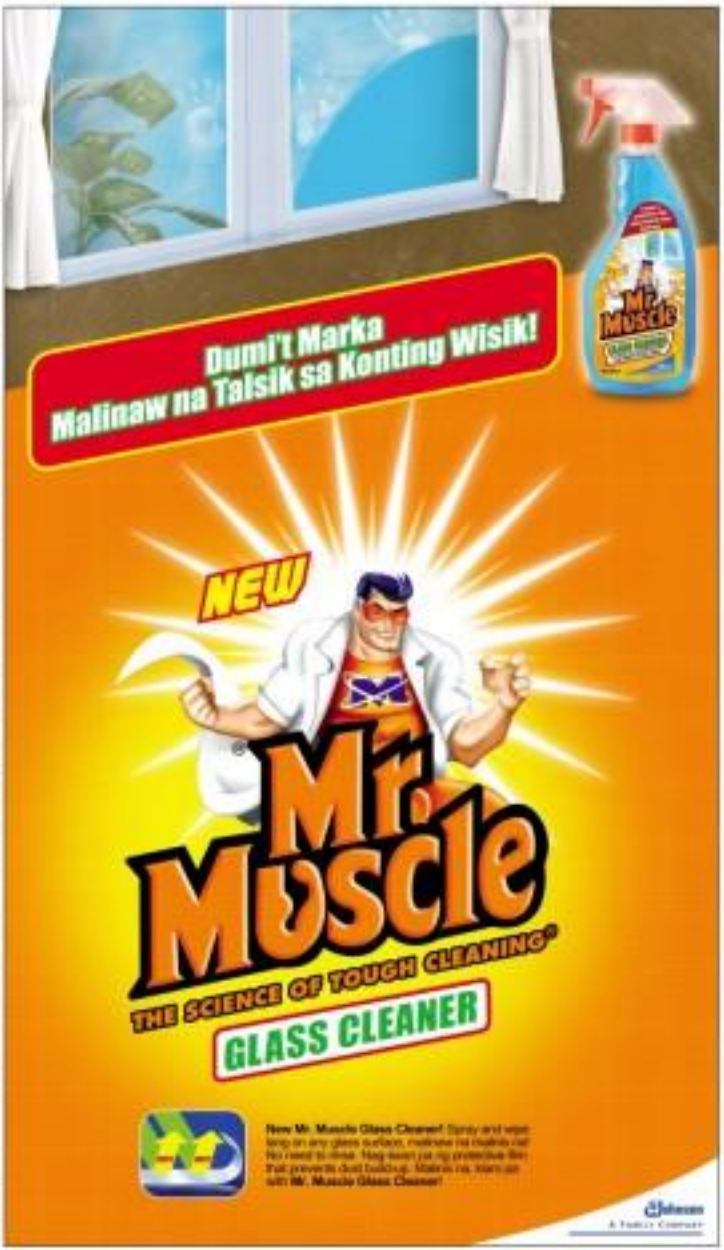
DOUBLE YOUR REWARD. American Express Preferred Platinum Credit Card holders have up to Dec. 24 to earn triple or triply reward points for every P50 spent in participating establishments. Promo participants include Ayala Center, Rustan's, Prestige Zero 8989, Somerville, Paul Smith, Rico, Chromos, Escada, Escada Sport, Abrahams Institute, Bombay, Laurel, Nike Forum, Nike Woman, Nike Fourth, Bonaparte, Gloryposts, St. John, Tourneau and Shiseido.

TEA SET CONTEST. Deadline for submissions of entries to the first-ever tea set competition is Dec. 31. Winners of the contest, co-sponsored by the Ceramic Association of Philippine Potters, will get cash prizes: 1st place, P15,000; 1st place, P12,000; second, and P5,000. Bond. Three entries will get honorable mention awards and P1,000 cash. A tea set with theme and the competition will be held on January of the Intercontinental Hotel Manila Lobby of the Ayala Center in Makati. Date to be announced later. Area set must consist of a tea pot and at least one cups. A submission fee of P700 per entry will be charged. Call The Pottery Workshop at 7260886 or e-mail pmeypuzik@yahoo.com.

REUNION. The University of the Philippines Institute of Engineering Alumni Association will hold its grand reunion "Rauh na Dekada na, Pusong Lasing pa!," Feb. 3, 2007 at the Maritime Hall, UP Diliman, QC. There will be a get-to-know-you Feb. 2, 7 p.m. at Camp Aguinaldo. Call 981-0008 local 7438 or 3440.

FASHION SHOW. A fashion show dubbed "Promenade by Philippines, a tribute to Christian Lacroix," is set Jan. 24, 2007 at the Ground Casino Filipino, Pagcor Grand Theater, Bloss, Pagcor Avenue, Brgy. Sto. Niño, Parañaque City. The fashion show will benefit the construction of the Parañaque Museum. Featured fashion designers include Inno Sotto, Oliver Martin Gomez, Julie Javier, Leonardo and Bunge Ramos. Also featured are the Parañaque designers Jun-Jun Cambre, Pamela Duarte Carino, Serge Jiménez, Bayan Dy-angco, Ann Diaz and Dino Velasco.

TRAINING. The National Museum will conduct "Docents' Training on Philippine Visual Art," Feb. 6-9. The four-day training includes the following topics: Nature, Elements and Organization of Art; Perceptions and Appreciation of Art; Summary of Pre-colonial and Southeast Asian Cultural Art in the Philippines; Philippine Art during the Spanish, American and Japanese Periods; and Study and Appreciation of Works at the National Art Gallery. Call 527-1215 for details.



Charged with holiday flair

YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO BE CAUGHT wearing the same little black dress during the holidays. The season calls for some added dramatic flair.

Cinderella has anticipated the need for a little holiday flair and has a lot of pieces that can be styled in a multitude of ways.

For BPI credit-card holders, there are more reasons to shop at Cinderella and live-standing stores of I.T. Expii, HaDAS, Pierre Cardin, Goldsmith W Clock, Clarks, British India and Rampage. For a minimum purchase of P3,000, a BPI cardholder can pay installments at reduced rates until Feb. 28, 2007.

And for the same period, customers who use their BPI Express credit at any Cinderella outlet and live-standing stores for a minimum P1,500 single-receipt purchase are instantly qualified to join the raffle promo.

A raffle for 50 winners will be drawn on March 31, 2007, with each winner enjoying a shopping spree worth P10,000. Customers can welcome than once!

Cinderella has over 200 brands under its umbrella, including international fashion labels Expii, British India, UL Hatbal, Rampage, Pierre Cardin and local brands Inventario, C Woman and C-Kids.

DRESS with color and drama this season. Cinderella offers items that can be styled in a multitude of ways.

COLOUR Collection Metallic Eyeshadow Palettes, with frosted shades that you can mix and match

COLOUR Collection Mascara in Blackest Black or Brown

Smoky eyes for the holidays

THIS YULETIDE SEASON, glam up by giving your eyes some makeover to make a smoky, tantalizing statement.

Colour Collection, from Sara Lee Direct Selling, Inc., one of the country's leading direct-selling companies, shares tips on how to get instantly defined, luminously expressive eyes for the holidays.

Create a flawless, smoky look with Colour Collection Metallic Eyeshadow Palette, with frosted shades that you can mix and match to achieve that dramatic effect.

Be experimental with your eyeliner by using Colour Collection Retractable Eyeliner in Blue or Silver. Just line your bottom eyelid about halfway for smaller eyes, or go wonky to the inner corner for larger eyes.

Remember to layer a shadow's definition. Then line your top lid using Colour Collection Black Liquid Eyeliner.

Finally, use Colour Collection Mascara in Darkest Black or Brown. Apply the mascara to more of lashes to add color and depth, and give the illusion of larger eyes.

BPI EXPRESS CREDIT

Give triple happiness with triple spending power.

With BPI Express Credit, enjoy up to three times your regular credit limit* and real 0%** interest on your S.I.P. purchases this holiday season.

BPI We'll take you further.

*Your S.I.P. credit limit increased up to three times your regular credit limit. Your maximum purchase will depend on the number of times you have been a BPI cardholder. To know your unconsumed S.I.P. limit, call BPI Express Phone 89 100.

**0% annual rate, terms, and conditions apply.

0% S.I.P.

Promo period: October 16, 2006 to January 15, 2007

A season for romance and elegance

ROMANCE AND EASY ELEGANCE CHARACterize global fashion brand Laurèl's Fall/Winter 2006 collection.

Mix casual with classic design for magnificent contrasts in fabric, cut or styling. You can create a playful yet feminine look which will take you from day time family gatherings to swooning rendezvous.

Narrow pants or voluminous skirts are perfect with Laurèl's small jacket and blazer with stand-up collars. Ultra feminine cups are charming on masculine pants in dark blue or cute denim with hammered metal buttons.

Epaulets, belts and ribbons make this collection of quiet colors... black, graphite and dark brown—edgier.

Romantic and detail-rich skirts and tailored jackets evoke curves from Hitchcock films. Fragile and tonal, the collection showcases femininity at its best.

Laurèl's new approach to design creates light and airy elegance but projects a new image for tailoring. The Fall/Winter collection combines color, cut, style and contrasting elements to create a fresh, feminine look for the modern woman.

The Laurèl shop is at U/L, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong.

LAUREL lets you exude edgy sophistication and femininity in a shamelessly unbuttoned aubergine top and matching pants.

EXPRESSIONS of true femininity and joie de vivre in Femme by Rasa and Escada Into the Blue

Yuletide 'scent-iments'

CALLED IN A WORLD OF YULETIDE FESTIVITIES—parties, reunions and all manner of rituals, feeling and smelling good ranks high on everyone's agenda. Smelling even more outstanding—because at no other time of the year do people hug and kiss as many friends and relatives as possible in record time! Now is the perfect occasion to go scent-hunting, what with the chilly December breeze setting the ambiance for that pleasurable quest—picking a new signature scent befitting a loved one, a friend or everyone's call.

Ruston Marketing Corporation, exclusive distributor of various brands, offers the finest array of premium fragrances for this season. Indulge in these delightful olfactory concoctions from respected fashion giants—Escada, Givenchy, Nina Ricci, Carolina Herrera, Elizabeth Arden, Estada, Bruno, Anne Sui, Lacoste, Hugo Boss and Alfred Dunhill. Somewhere out there is a scent that perfectly fits a head-turning and confident girl-friend, a loving mom, a workaholic boss, a dapper uncle, a sentimental brother ...the list is endless!

For young and vivacious women who relish that beguiling child-woman appeal, Escada-obsessed Anna Sui's berry-Well Magic Romance—an enchanting scent found fragrance that captures the heady rush of first love. The blend of bergamot, Italian lemon, melon, Orange blossom, tuberose, jasmine, lotus blossom, rosewood, coconut amber and round out equitation the romantic menagerie of emotions within every young girl on the throes of womanhood and tomboy. Nina by Nina Ricci, is as tempting as ever from its apple-shaped bottle to its fruity scent, which uniquely blends Caribbean lemon, Calyptrium lime with peony, muscadiness, apple wood, white cedar and for the very first time, coffee apple. Evoking beauty, charm and happiness, this luscious fragrance captures the enchantment and magic of the Yuletide season. Lacoste Inspiration presents its a-mischievous debut for life. This feminine, floral scent, which is a-mischievous, floral scent, which is a-mischievous, floral scent, which is a-mischievous

HIMA'S hosts Chito Vijandre and Nicky Toledo in their Japanese outfits

YIG FUN GANG: Joy Esposito del Rosario, Anton Barreiro, Leah Reyes and Angelmar Cabrera

STEALIT Djamal with wife Lucinda Lorenzo, Rachel Badulo and her gorgeous daughter Maria Djamal

HAIR: Lagdameo with Harley Ong and Chay Cabonegro of Bernardo's popular Asia Room

MUA Coronel's Jeannie Endlesam and daughter Katrina S. Pelaez, and the Pamilio sisters, Pamela, Yolaine and Vicky Clapanon

CHITO Vijandre, Anthony and Joey Trias

Japanese Floating-World art

THEY THAT POPULAR ARO CHIC home store Hima and the Nicole Gallery Greenbelt to bring art to where more people get to see it: at the mall, no less! Hmmm, palengke.

Hima organized the ten elegant exhibition of 17th-19th century Japanese paintings and woodcut prints, titled "The Floating World," at the Greenbelt lobby.

During the opening, the koto music played in the background, and we were transported to the world of "shoguns, samurais, courtesans and kabuki characters," all masterfully executed in the artworks by renowned Japan artists.

Hima's brilliant partners, Chito Vijandre and Nicky Toledo, welcomed us, wearing their authentic "hakama trousers" and wooden geta clogs.

The guests included some of the event's esquisite signors, artes and art enthusiasts.

The interior designer and PGI columnist Dean Peters-Robles could very well have been the hostess of this event herself. She boasted in perfect Japanese geisha makeup and opulent kimono by talented Cebu designer Bernard Gaerlan.

The glam Mimi Mimi Ong (and three gold bracelets of sculpted walking leaves with gemstones to accent her top) she also wore a hair wreath of dainty blossoms and pearls set in gold, all of her own design, natch!

M Griffin's Mia Barrientos updated her ta mono-inspired gown with cropped jeans.

Lulu Tan Gan wore one of her own Japanese inspired embellishments.

Barbara designer, gorgeous Tina Monzon, global grandlady in her Yohji Yamamoto wrap "Art," talking about her grand passion of the moment: "the restoration of the spectacular Corregidor church in Bataan."

The glamorous Malibu sisters, Pamela Valdes and Vicky Cinco, were one chic act, always. Ashdrop, telling us that Super Jeweler Ben Golden Tan just came back from London... where they could score no more enough silver bags."

Also in Chi's team was the actor-cum-DJ for dashing boyfriend, young entrepreneur Archie Rodriguez. She was wearing effortlessly the highest pair of Louboutin black suppose had ever seen.

Well, Cherry Bellina, and the bubbly flowing all night long. It was a Floating World indeed, palengke, with fine art and the best company.

Adidas' hip-hop nights

On a Wednesday night, we packed the Illusions Club for a taste of hip-hop courtesy of the hip and hopping Adidas, natch!

Come what, all those running Adidas Originals got to be true!

Adidas is one of the pioneers in hip-hop fashion, with the Adidas Originals Line. A part of the collection has been associated with hip-hop, including Run-DMC and her own Respect MC collection of sneakers, tops, head wear and bags.

High-profile style mavens dashing and rocking included models Will DeMeglio and Brad Arnaez, actor Marvin Agustin and director, and Dirk Joseph, fashion director for Ito Asia Pacific, who all lined our route for the street scenario, palengke.

The entire Mod's Hut was here, there and everywhere helping entertained the guests, natch!

Digging into the scrambling deepbeats were hotshot namedroppables such as good-looking Tagaig Mayor Freddie Tinga and fashionable Anne Tinga; Oksenberg's Dennis Tantoco and Indy Family Dodo Puyat; Mod's friend Charlene (super endorser; pawnshop beauty (see Barney Gomez and daughter Juliana; designers Sandy Ortiz and Arlene Inocencio; Publish Us; fashionista Cecile Zamora and husband, chef Arsenio; stunningly gorgeous models Pamela de Leon, Bubbles Paraiso, Shaina Taborda and Cathy Santamaria-Kocsan, all from this, yet they couldn't get enough of Krispy Kreme.

Coming their sweet short were my pink-shirt neighbor Joanna Delgado-Duarte and Vicky Jalandoni of the Sig in Small Co.; Marissa Capuyugco-Lapa, Pin Gutierrez, super hair (and mama, entrepreneur Angelette Calleja, Leah Puyat and Janice Barreiro, beautiful couple Brad Henderson and Joanna Prunder, and the most Historic brother, TL, paleogist.

Krispy Kreme opened its second store yesterday at SM Megamall Building A.

They'll be running to the next opening faster than you can say, "Where are you going?" to Krispy Kreme somewhere.

IT'S all about Adidas. Dandy Custodio, sports marketing manager of Adidas Philippines, with fashionistas twins Rachel and Raquel Guerrero

BOASTFUL brassiere, Georgina Wilson and Richard Gutierrez

BASKETBALL pro Larry Fonacier and Lara Gabat

BASKETBALL pro Wesley Gonzales

ONE of the hostess hosts on air, DJ Mo Twister of "Good Times with Mo"

YMD, Yazon of Bangpasola

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen
using Kodak Easy Share

Bruno Aguilar, and hip hop figures Mojo Jones and Sandy.

Daughters!

It's amazing how one room can can't get enough of the young pretty Krispy Kreme daughters, paleogist.

We can't forget how in the past few runs of bellhops or customers from the US stood home and home of Krispy Kreme for their friends and family back home.

We should know—I carried several boxes every time I got back from the US and Sydney Australia, for my favorite paparazzi, who would tell nothing else but Krispy Kreme.

Well, darlings, now Krispy Kreme is just a seconds ride away after the opening of their flagship store at Bonifacio High Street, The Fort, paleogist.

It had to be the Mod's Fried Chicken family that climbed the branches of America's most sweet sensation doughnuts. And from the looks of it, with 20 awesome stores to open in the next few years, the Philippines will be another Krispy Kreme country.

In fact, darlings, the Manila opening looks all future rewards, sending Krispy Kreme openings to Korea, Hong Kong and Indonesia, with at least 3,000 people lining up on the first day to get their Original Glazed doughnuts fix!

Handsome young achiever Jun T. Fernandez, brother-in-law of the first American daughter-in-law, the Philippine franchise holder of this doughnut, welcomed the invitees to the Krispy Kreme VIP night at Bagong store with wife, glamour photo Brandon, and son Diego.

Looking absolutely happy were the opening suits were Jeff Welch, Krispy Kreme Int'l. senior vice-president for development and international franchisor Jim Rogers, international marketing

KRISPY Kreme-delards. Bob Ali & Lauderness and daughters CD, Kirbie and Bundie

THE ENTIRE Mod's clients. Seated (left-right, Lorie Standing: Rica and Robert Tress, Jenny Tress, Bobby Fuentebella, Jim and Maris Fuentebella, and Sharon

MODEL Vanessa Hayuga, Mario Pijuan Mansmo and Teddy Mansmo

GUSTAVO Duarte Textron and son

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JAPANESE art lovers Lizette Ciquengco, Tats Manahan, Mia Bienvenido, Georgie Chrysolite, Ginny de Guzman and Annie Young

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Sole sensations

VIA VENETTO CELEBRATES FILIPINO craftsmanship with its latest collection of footwear. The brand has long stood for Filipino creativity, producing world-class pieces that marry style and function.

Via Venetto's classic leather shoes as well as its dressy line of Swarovski-embellished footwear by jewelry designer Inky Nakpil boasts of highly embellished designs that combine the stylish with beads, stock and metal.

In versatile shades of gold, silver and black, the Swarovski collection can go from daytime, with simpler styles like a mesh and crystal silver thong sandal or a gold thong with large, multifaceted crystals, which look best loose heels, or nighttime, with higher styles like a gold, open-toe sandal with a bracelet-like, crystal detail that combines stones-studded straps.

Via Venetto is the only Filipino shoe brand licensed to use the brand Swarovski, and every pair in the collection carries the tag of authenticity.

The leather shoes are updated classics with simple details like a delicate peephole on pumps, top stitching, wedge heels and contrasted trimmers like suede with leather.

The Swarovski shoes are glamorous yet practical as the name time. These glamorizing pieces can complement a sleek, evening gown as much as a simple, daytime shift dress, as these shoes can function as an outfit centerpiece in the same way jewelry does. Via Venetto's shoes are not meant to go unnoticed. Many shoe just completing one's outfit, they make the outfit.

There highly durable shoes also carry a lifetime assessing, which is unique to Via Venetto. The brand was built on the tradition of creating simple yet superior shoe sense that takes world-class materials like Austrian Swarovski crystals and Italian bubble leathers and meticulously check with a nod to the Filipino's unique eye for style and durability.

Via Venetto stores are located at Glorietta 1, Greenbelt 1, SM Megamall and Alabang Town Center.

HEEL, a well-designed evening thong with Swarovski.

SAMSUNG

TOLL FREE 1-800-10SAMSUNG

WHITE sleeveless fur cap worn with black long-sleeve cardigan & top

Fashion fur-cast

LONG ASSOCIATED WITH GLAMOUR and elegance, fur today takes on a new age, fresher shapes and colors, with soft loops and mod textures prints leading the way.

The new-generation furs are designed as perfect accent pieces: wraps with satin bow straps, as vests, capes, and collars, even as scarf-wraps.

With cooler days ahead, wrap these fur pieces around a basic tee or tank top. Or wear a fur collar around a cardigan for a glam new look. Animal-lovers need not worry as these are faux furs.

The collection is available at the Bazaar fashion department of all SM stores.

SPAGHETTI STRAP tank top with bow and leopard-striped faux fur jacket

NECKLACE fur wrap with bow detail over black long-sleeve top and denim jeans

LIFESTYLE
Editor Chelo Bandi-Formoso
Contributing editor Ria Francisco-Prieto

Get the relaxation you deserve during the holidays... inside a store where you can also buy presents

BEAUTY

SHOPWISE
A Christmas Ball
Have a Ball and let the good times roll at Shopwise this Christmas. An avalanche of prizes, surprises and fun await as Shopwise brings you a well-rounded celebration of all things Christmas!
Pass on warm and fuzzy feelings with exquisite gifts!
Have a Ball at Shopwise this CHRISTMAS!
SHOPWISE
the good life you can afford
NO MEMBERSHIP REQUIRED

Found: relaxation in a store

HAVE YOU HEARD of Marionnaud? If you haven't, it is a one-stop beauty hub that carries many cosmetic brands, and it even has a spa called Decleor where you can indulge yourself. It's...

That's what I did when I got there. I think I got so overwhelmed with all the products on display. I left my Christmas list at home, but since coming home with an empty pocket because of all the exciting new products I was seeing was too scary. I figured I should just take off and buy goodies the next time.

Fortunately for me, I bumped into a girl who just stepped out of the Decleor treatment room.

She was glowing, and I got curious. So on the long escalator, I rushed up getting their numbers, and it was the best thing I did for myself in about three months.

I figured I needed a facial, so I tried the Aroma Skincare Facial First, I was given a back massage using aromatherapy salts by active ingredients are myrrh, marshmallow, frankincense, essential oils and macadamia, red palm and shea butter. I was thinking, wow, how Delicious-y!

Then came the cleansing part and removal of makeup, including the toning part. After that, my face was exfoliated using Dry-Topsol, which removes dead skin cells, purifies and brightens the face, and absorbs impurities.

Rita Francisco-Prieto

The part I enjoyed the most came next: massagement. followed by aromadrainage massage.

Aromagement is a massage done on lymphatic pressure points. It's like acupuncture on the face minus the needles.

Since my skin type is normal-combination, the therapist suggested I try the aromasource scrub oil.

This is because the oil Marionnaud uses on you is dependent on your skin type. The specific carrier oil we had on said oil helps diffusing ingredient and an oil around face that would help my skin adjust to environmental conditions.

Then, with the use of aromasource in Essential Saline, which detoxifies, heals and restores balance for the maintenance of my normal skintone, the massage came to long strokes, apparently to drain the excess fluid on my face. The whole process was very relaxing, while the scents and the music itself added to the therapeutic experience.

The hemispheric finish was the next stage in my very luxurious facial. The mask contains eight different types of cotton and natural clay that heal and repair skin, are anti-bacterial and rich in nutrients, have anti-oxidants and also moisturize the skin. Yay!

AQUATHALITE before and after the hemisphere

The final step was the application of the day Hydra Floral serum. The cream is designed to immediately rehydrate and replenish the skin of its lost moisture, for continuous moisturizing.

I enjoyed the facial so much that I knew I had to try the body next. There were four programs to choose from: relax, restore, detoxify and tone.

I picked relax since the therapist said it would help destress, unwind and balance my still-lacking. Also, I actually liked that the aromatic oils used would include myrrh and frankincense, which would nicely enrich my facial. I figured that since the Christmas spirit hadn't hit me yet, it might at least do the work for me.

The session started with a body scrub using white lily like baby lotion with beads. The therapists used Decleor's signature long strokes and I felt like a baby being rocked to sleep. After about 20 minutes, I rinsed off the scrub then came for the body massage.

Only essential oils were used and the long soothing rhythmic movement lulled me to sleep. I do know that my whole body was massaged using Aromessence Relax Massage Balm, because at times when I was half-awake I'd ask the therapist what it was she was using on me.

After the massage, which also addressed my skin, a serum mask was applied on my body. I was wrapped in a plastic sheet for 20 minutes.

While so wrapped thus, I was given a scalp massage, which put me in deep again. In a few minutes, I woke up to take a shower, then the staff applied nutrition lotion and hydrating lotion all over my body. My skin and I never felt this good!

Since I was rejuvenated, relaxed and feeling really good, I indulged all the way and got myself a hand and foot treatment, too.

The foot massage started with a foot bath. The process for the hands and feet were pretty much the same, to face exfoliate, then massage with a nail protector called desincarnisse Ongles, which acts like a shield that strengthens and keeps the nails healthy while also stabbing your hands and feet look younger.

The neem mask and oil-lowerages—a type of massage with circular motion—were the last steps of the treatment.

I don't know of one person who won't enjoy and benefit from Decleor's treatments. Gift checks for treatments are available, or if Decleor gift checks run off I get for Christmas, I won't complain one bit!

FRESH-FACED beauty using YVES's newly launched color palette makes for the perfect day look.
Eyes: Chanel
Blush: Cabana Cola
Lips: Here is All

Ethereal beauty

By Cura Sibal
Contributor

FINDING THE RIGHT KIND of makeup is much like finding the right guy. There may be many to choose from, but they're not all good for you.

Having sensitive skin can make the difficult almost impossible. With pollutants all around us, and being in a tropical country basked in the sun almost 365 days a year, we must be extra watchful about what we put on our face.

Having sensitive skin can also be a bit of challenge when opting to revamp your look for a special occasion. The "Sensitive Asianess freak face" may not be so easy to achieve, especially when you're layering concealer one after the other. And as many pros declare, "The best foundation is really great skin."

So, priority should be to find cosmetics that will really "work" for your skin. That way you get to have your cake and eat it, too!

Now, formulated with great skin in mind is YSL's hypoallergenic. Founded in 1970, YSL has been known for skincare products geared toward enhancing and maintaining skin health.

Spearheaded by international renowned dermatologist and dermopathologist Dr. Nanda Mirabile Rowell, YSL has always transposed the importance of good skin. Dr. Rowell has continually rallied behind the concept of using products that are skin-friendly, that ultimately lead to that radiant, youthful-looking glow.

Wonderful skin is essential for casting the right looks, and your mood also have the right palette of colors to play with. That being the case, YSL recently launched its latest new line of makeup and eye shadows. Hitting the runways first as the makeup sponsor at the Bruno Gaspar-on Competition held by Mega Magazine last October, the great shades and hues were nothing less than glamorific!

With the country of elements and designers featured, YSL's new line of cosmetics followed every country look with a rainbow palette. Hitting nudes and vibrant colors, lushed makeup artists creatively changed moods from subdued to the dramatic shades.

Now, who said the skin-conscious would simply have to live with just a few shades? With a full array of neutral earth tones to many colors, YSL allows one to have a field day with colors. We can now see cosmetics freely without having to worry about allergies, allergens and harmful ingredients.

Great skin

Achieving great looks doesn't have to mean devastating the skin. Standing by its mantra of great skin from diapers to dermabrasion, YSL products are 100-percent hypoallergenic, fragrance free. Apparently, very often allergic reactions in certain cosmetic brands can be traced to their core elements. Certain types of elements, dyes and fragrances cause adverse reactions on the skin, leading to severe itch, redness, even inflammation.

Mindful of these factors, YSL Cosmetics uses a VR-Rating System, which was formulated 20 years ago to ensure how hypoallergenic each product is. The higher the VR rating, the less allergens are possibly present. To date, there are 27 known allergens published by the International Cosmetic Ingredient Dictionary, over half of YSL's products boast of the highest VR-rating possible (VR 27).

To add to their impressive track record, YSL ingredients are proven to be 100-percent preservative-free, PARA-free (without organic chemicals known to irritate skin) and noncomedogenic (they won't clog pores).

If you'd like to look fresh-faced and not overdone, earth tones would be a good bet

UP ante the vamp-up your look

THE "WHATATEASE" color palette for eyes perfectly enhances dramatic profiles for an evening look.
Eyes: Whatatease
Lips: Big Ol'
Gloss: Baby Cheeks Just Wood Cheek!

POCKET-FRIENDLY lip and cheek tint

No-excuse

As harrowing as the holidays may be, there's still no excuse to look tired and exhausted for the after-hours parties. One easy way to still look blooming even at night.

Learning to understand good skin care is a discipline that one have learned from mom, who Apart from cleansing, we must make sure that our skin is properly prepared and protected before even putting on makeup. If you know that you are going to be in and out of the sun all day, make sure you have sun protection.

When it comes to your face, put on a good foundation and sometime it with neutral colors, as Creative Rebellion of tucked hair does down on model du jour Helena Bolanowski. If you'd like to look fresh-faced and not overdone, earth tones would be a good bet. Just a little blush and a tad of lipstick and you have that polished look.

For evenings, try experimenting by downplaying your cheeks. Concentrate colors on the eyes and a little tint on the lips for a more sophisticated look. Add a few accessories, and you're ready to go to evening, more till night.

Radiant skin for stressful holidays

BETWEEN ATTENDING classy mooncakes, meeting deadlines, performing double time for work, and going to endless Christmas parties, and shopping at the last minute, is there still time for sleep?

MAKEOVER 911

Xiaxue Safar

My face skin got dull, blotchy and dehydrated. We are all working on a budget this time of the year so I have reverted these readjusted and fairly reasonably priced items for each to subside.

If you are open this early, it's okay to have a little tempered sweet. Here are designed to work together for maximum results. For this reason I will include the prices of all items.

Moisturizer — Fine Between You...Essential. Joy is the active ingredient and it was discovered by Neutrogena to effectively and colourfully moisturize skin tighter skin.

This Joy has also been found to slow down hair growth which is perfect for those with copper lip hair and sensitive skin. Scarily cautionary who have to always wax and pluck.

The Joy may be more valuable to those with normal to dry skin, but may be too rich for very oily and acne prone girls.

I did not break out, but my acne prone skin got shiny really fast even if it did stay smooth.

I used the SPF 15 lotion for bedtime over the creams and the SPF 30 sunblock I used for daytime under the CC compact.

An element the compact is my favorite as it lightens and boosts the skin while averaging imperfections.

But I found the two shades available only for light (Light Beige) to medium-dressed (Natural Beige) women.

Conclusion:

OLAY

Ocean, P200; Toner, P310; Essence, P661.25; UV Compact powder foundation, P641; Oxygen Lotion SPF 15, P420; foundation SPF 30, P641.25; Hydrating Mask, P132.75.

Olay Total effects + SPF 15 (P599)—Who has not seen the commercials with the beautiful celebrities?

Although I did not break out, the texture was a bit richer than what I would have wanted, so for two weeks, I only wore it at night.

I would wake up to soft baby skin and after the two-week mark, my skin did look brighter and firmer. I also did not need an eye cream.

INSTANT O2

NEUTROGENA Fine Between Line

Life is Good, With Gourmet Goodness

Gourmet Goodness at Home...

Radiant skin for stressful holidays

From page 61

My friends with fine lines liked it as well and swore they saw results in their eyes's fine and laugh lines. And they had the result to see as proof as that of the more expensive Clinique bottles, which they all got from the US on her salaries for now. I'm holding my breath for that one!

Mistine White Spa—This whitening product from Thailand is perfect for those with very oily skin/see the items aren't greasy.

Everything, except for the whitening and anti-aging serum, is great for any age.

The whitening body line is just as super and the power tonic (Activ Alert) is gel.

Glutathione Soft-ax (P49.75) has an ingredient that not only effectively whitens (Alpha Arbutin) but also smoothens (hydrolyzed wheat protein). It also contains soybean protein to slow down hair growth. Facial Foam (P120.75) keeps my face matte and pesky white after every washing. Whitening and Anti-Age Sun Gel SPF 15 (P420.75) actually baked pimple marks and lighter sun spots.

Other items: Extra-whitening loose powder (P175.75), which Lucy Torres wore; UV Creams, P220.75, and body scrub, P219.75, which I felt was a bit too gentle for results.

Pond's Age Miracle line with: DAA—Targeted for women who are 35 years old and above. All the items in the line were great, but the major standouts for me were the eye cream (P220), cream 50ml (P480) and eye cream (P345).

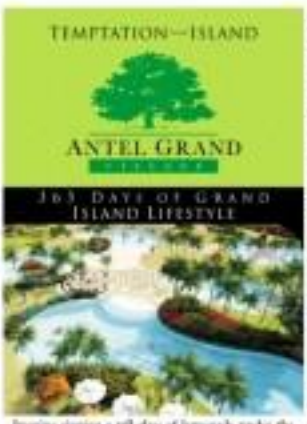
The seven day scrub does not. Pores seemed smaller, skin more translucent and felt more dewy and hydrated.

Unless your skin is very dry and/or wrinkled — you don't need to use it for a very cold country, you can do away with the serum which tends to make the fine-fine skin extra-oily.

The cream was surprisingly soft/ eerie on the open land. Eye action is listed here, not in the serum.

All items available at Watsons, drugstores, and other establishments

MISTINE whitening and anti-aging serum



Imagine sipping a tall glass of lemonade under the cool shade of swaying palm trees, while a gentle breeze caresses your hair. Could this be a scene from your dream vacation? Wake up! The idyllic scene is happening right in your neighborhood! That is, if you choose to live at the Antel Grand Village, where grand island living happens 365 days of the year.

WELCOME TO THE ISLAND LIFE

Antel Grand Village is the first and only urban-oriented community with an island setting. Verdant scenery embraces over 200 hectares of carefully planned residential villages, commercial districts and recreational areas amid a sprawling 1.2-hectare resort and country club. So after a long day at work you can hopefully unwind at the clubhouse where you can take a dip in 1 swim-stimulating swimming pools, relax at the spa, practice some jumping, work out in the gym and so much more! Best of all, membership to this resort and country club is absolutely free!

SO MANY TEMPTATIONS

No one can resist the many temptations of this island lifestyle, especially when you see the price. At Antel Grand Village, you can unwind for less as low as P6,700! Lots range from 80 sqm to 300 sqm. What's more, there are no membership fees, no association dues!

House and lot packages are also available. You can choose from three different home models that evoke Asian contemporary design: wide windows, spacious living area and a lanai.

THE ISLAND WITHIN REACH

Whole living in this community isolated you from the city's hustle and bustle, access to many destinations is not a problem. Antel Grand Village is strategically located between Kamuning and General Texas, Cubao, and just a few minutes away from the booming industrial zone of Cainta Pasig-Ortigas Ave. With the new E1 Expressway also taking it community will be 10 minutes away from the Mall of Asia in Macapagal Boulevard. And the Ninoy Aquino Avenue will also be 10 minutes away through the new Ninoy-Hizo Road.

All these advantages make Antel Grand Village truly a paradise of an island. With all the comforts and convenience of modern living, you never have to give up the real way of life due to paradise by calling 740-4451.

For As Low As P6,700 A Month

No Reservation Fee • No Downpayment

MISTINE whitening facial foam

POND'S Age Miracle

MOTOROLA

Win a gift that's much better than a partridge in a pear tree.

"On the Fourth day of Christmas, my Moto gave to me, 4 MotoMings and a new MOTOKRZR for free."

Tune in to your favorite radio station. Listen closely to Motorola's Twelve Gifts of Christmas and follow the DJ's instructions after the song is played. If you can sing the song then correctly answer the DJ's question, you'll get to win cool Motorola gifts and a chance to win the new Motorola KRZR and RIZR phones! Better than Four calling birds and Three French hens.

Make Motorola's 12 Gifts of Christmas your ring tone and ring back. Just text in the following keywords and send to 2668.

For Truetone text:
HELLOMOTO TT 12GIFTS
For Monotone text:
HELLOMOTO MT 12GIFTS
For Polytone text:
HELLOMOTO PT 12GIFTS

For Ring back:
Globe: Text **MOTO12GIFTS** or **12GIFTS** and send to 2332
Smart: Text **RING ADD 109670** and send to 288

MOTOROLA 12 GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

GOWN by Monique Lhuillier (courtesy of madame Amparito Lhuillier and Ms Jan P. Lhuillier)

Wish list

DRAGHEIT chair by Kenneth Cobonpue, available at Bodi Living showroom (tel. 8965048)

THIS WAS A SHOOT LIKE NO other, a fashion/design coup of sorts, because it involved a host of highly talented Filipinos who've made their mark in the ultra-competitive international arena.

Stylist Miller Arenas recently worked to bring together a lineup of fashion movers and shakers who truly make us proud to be Pinoy.

To make the editorial more visual, we've focused on the products – four very outstanding line of extra-special Christmas treats) that have catapulted the chosen designers into international fame.

As such, are lessons Ann de Leon, who never fails to push the bar a little higher, shot and treated the theme (using the latest infrared technology, mind you) as the set pieces that they are. The results, extremely vivid, goosebumps-inducing black-and-white stills that remind me why I am passionate about what I do.

APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberin-Sadsword

BAG BY Rubi, available at Rin Grandeur 3

Let these beautiful photographs and equally stunning pieces, products all of Filipino talent, speak for themselves

BEADED vial belt by Bea Valdez

SEQUINED dress by Gaspe, available at the basement of The Peninsula Manila. Background crystals from Swarovski

The product lineup is composed of no less than the following: multi-awarded furniture designer Kenneth Cobonpue's Draghet chair made of polyester fabric weaved and wrapped around a frame of powder-coated steel with stainless steel legs; style icon Bea Valdez's exquisite beaded belt that's available in stores like Bayanya and Harvey Nichols; Aurrel's head designer Carley Rhodes's tuxedo-like jacket, which was Stella-ed all the way from London; fashion Shanghai Tang creative director and top designer Gene Gaspe's bejeweled athletic one of many) ornamental thrills worn here; and an ethereal wedding and red-carpet designer Monique Lhuillier's romantic, ethereal gown.

I can go on and on about all these personal, fair stellar achievements. I can expound on their creative thin broadwork that is both a visual and tactile treat. Or I can enumerate Kenneth and Carley's many awards, or relate just how much Bea Valdez's standard for artisan pieces. I can even tell you all about Rubi's rise to fame and Gene's long, illustrious career. But for now, allow me to keep this short and simple.

Let these beautiful photographs and equally stunning pieces speak for themselves. In this season of thanksgiving, may these inspire. Please join in too and your list.

Merry Christmas to one and all from all of us at Inquirer Fashion!

E-mail the author at abadsword@inquirer.com.ph

Photography Jan De Leon
Concept styling Miller Arenas
Body hair courtesy of Better Than Bare Lingerie

TWEETIE dons simple and elegant black Vuarnet shades with Skylynx lenses.

LEXI sports trendy black oversized Vuarnet shades with high-quality Skylynx lenses.

More than meets the eye

TARSIANS BEAUTIES TWEETIE DE LEON-ROMERO, LEXI SCHEIN-Berenguer-Testa and Alexa Alaiza are more than just pretty faces dressed in fashionable freaks. Alice's fascinating and inspiring about them written in the accomplished beauty line.

A loving wife and a mother of five, Tweetie is a sought-after product endorser and jewelry designer with her own product line, Ice.

Nine-month Lexi is a multimillion beat-designer-columnist, editor, freelance writer-actress who's back in school for her Masters in Counseling Psychology in the De La Salle University.

Meanwhile, Alexa juggles her time between perfecting her Spanish skills at the Instituto Cervantes de Manila and imparting what she's learned as a Spanish lieutenant at the Ateneo de Manila University. On top of these, she's also taking up her Masters in Education at De Ateneo and has her hands full handling full-on two kids.

Like these three accomplished women, Vuarnet sunglasses are more than just stylish sunglasses, in each pair can definitely continue

ALEXI wears a funky red pair of Vuarnet women's eyewear and stylish sunglasses.

form and function. In fact, professional athletes in the Los Angeles Olympic Games of 1984 proved that Vuarnet sunglasses exceeded their every expectations even challenging sporting conditions.

Although not pro athletes, Tweetie, Lexi and Alexa also believe in the importance of quality in their choice of eyewear, and Vuarnet Sunglasses definitely conforms to their standards.

High-performance Vuarnet sunglasses are coated using Ethoxi Spectraglide All and Stratilink Extreme plus technology. They are then encased in sturdy corrosion-resistant acetate, metal and nylon frames.

The mineral glasses provide excellent protection against the sun, have higher scratch resistance than plastic, and have outstanding optical qualities.

Furthermore, eight different glass varieties in green, bronze, yellow, and yellow-green colors, among them the Skylynx and Linlynx, are able to meet the most extreme quality standards of transparency and protection.

Vuarnet's high technology and unique polycarbon Tweetie, Lexi and Alexi to depend on the brand's durability and class. ###

MOTOROLA

Win a gift that's much better than a partridge in a pear tree.

"On the Fifth day of Christmas, my Moto gave to me, 5 Golden RAZRs and a new MOTOKRZR for free."

Tune in to your favorite radio station. Listen closely to Motorola's Twelve Gifts of Christmas and follow the DJ's instructions after the song is played. If you can sing the song then correctly answer the DJ's questions, you'll get to win cool Motorola gifts and a chance to win the new Motorola KRZR and RIZR phones! Better than Five golden rings and Four calling birds.

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For Polytone text
HELLOMOTO PT 12GIFTS

For Ring back:
Globe: Text MOTO12GIFTS or 12GIFTS and send to 2332
Smart: Text RBKI ADD 10567* and send to 208

MOTOROLA 12 GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

Filipino Artus Concepcion is at the helm of the very successful Headquarters PR in New York City

PR man to the fashion stars

MANY PEOPLE THINK of the PR world to be full about glitz, glam, and endless schmoozing at cocktail parties among society's namedroppables. Well, yes it is, but that's only one aspect of it. There is a whole other side to this cutthroat business that involves a lot of hard work, strategic planning and creative thinking for tailored clientele.

Meet demo Concepcion, a Filipino at the helm of the very successful Headquarters PR in New York City. It all sustained from a passion for fashion (I can relate to that), which led him to the ins and outs of working in such high-end clientele as Calvin Klein and Perlavine Tan.

The successful PR man's career reads like a red-carpet invite list: He's done publicity work for the likes of Isaac Mizrahi, Jean Shiraldi, Jeffrey Atkinson, Calvin Klein and Hanae Mori.

He likewise led PR work for London-based brands like Herstan and Estee Lauderwear, and directed activities for hip-hop brand Marc Ecko.

Along with his partner Jordan Schlesinger, who has done global publicity for eight years at J Crew, he heads Headquarters PR, whose services run the gamut of professional PR services, from public relations strategy development to day-to-day press relations, special events, celebrity membership, product launches and philanthropy programs.

Stop with his office and find out a few tricks of the trade of fashion PR in one of the world's fashion capitals.

What kind of publicity work do you do?

I do fashion PR. We do mostly fashion-oriented streaming. The clients that we have are Vivienne Tam, Catherine Malandrino, Mexx. We have a few fragrance brands, like Herstan. We also do shows for Tommy and Calvin Klein, which is currently a consulting client of ours.

Are you only 25-based?

Our work is mostly centered in New York, but we're trying to open a satellite office in London, too. There are a lot of hot new designers there, and so we want to offer our PR and representation services to those designers, as well.

We've been told that you're a graduate of Ateneo de Manila University. Is that true?

Yes, I graduated from Ateneo in 1995. I was an economics major.

What is your background? What led you to PR?

I grew up in Pampanga, and then I moved to college in 17th and in San Francisco. After college I moved to Los Angeles. So I used to work for an ADR (audition for shows). And then in 1996, three years out of Calvin Klein, which was for an ADR foundations, and Kate Moss showcased that. She was inside her and she was the perfect girl for Calvin Klein. Then I met the people from New York who produced the shows so I mentioned for them to come to New York to work for 2000. They had Marc Jacobs, Versace, Chloe, and Anna Sui. So pretty much I started doing PR in NY. Yes, I have always loved fashion, so I was led naturally into it. It wasn't really my main recollection, so I just fell into doing what I really love. I've worked for different agencies. I've worked in-house for Mark Jeffer, and I did PR for Old Navy as well, and then started my own agency two and a half years ago.

This is really my baby; it's so much better to work for you!

How did you get your own roster of high-end clients?

We didn't really advertise our agency to get our clients; it was mostly through networking. Most of the fashion editors we interviewed for her care designers for us. We do a lot of work with all of the fashion magazine editors, from Vogue to Harper, even men's magazines like GQ. We also work with international magazines like W in the UK, Harrod' and Conrad, Instyle, Vogue and British Vogue. Since we also do store events, the bulk of the work is actually in the editing of editors (such), or TV fashion segment or TV celebrity channels, celebrity magazines like People or Us Weekly.

Which fashion channels do you work with?

For fashion week, we work for a lot like Fashion File, E!, Fuse Fashion, and Global Fashion News. There are so many we carry work with Hong Kong and Canadian channels. We work with Fashion Television, too.

Only because it's popular here in Manila, have you worked with "Project Runway" at all?

I know Nina Garcia really well! Anyone in a very popular show and we're on the shows owners. Next season, we're going to try to put Vivienne Tam as one of the judges, to promote our designers. She's very well-established; even Catherine Malandrino was in the last season. It's hard, now that the show is so popular! Before, they were really asking for people to become a judge, now people are lining up.

Good for Michael Kors Flair! Were you what did you have to reach on to become a publicist?

I used to do backstage fashion productions, they call it back of house. That's where you see the models, take pictures, you do the run-up shows. I ended up doing the other side of fashion production, and got to know most of the fashion editors. It's the usual path: you move to bigger things.

Which part of publicity work do you enjoy the most?

I think it's mostly the networking. Or just appreciating the clothing of clients that you really believe in. We don't accept clients just because they pay it. I don't promote it, why take advantage of the monthly retainer? We also don't try to take clients that are conflicting or competing. For example, if I have a client specializing in men's suits, I won't take another client in the same line. What I enjoy the most? The events, the editing and the networking. Now, I go to more corporate ones, like the Consolidated Ball, or the CFDA parties. But my job is to publicize my clients, not myself. I've done the party circuits. I've done the social events. I've been there done that, and I've been to every show. I helped off the front; I see Cole in Khloe all the time, he lives in my neighborhood, I just wave at him. Total basic Manhattan's show-comer.

Name five (non-paying) people you can say you've really connected with.

Basically, everyone is really interesting, whether they're socialites or not. Most of the time I produce or promote [the celebrities]. So I know them and just because I attend the events. Even my girls are very professional. You have to make sure they're fun and ensure them to their seats during the fashion shows.

Is it all as glamorous as you see it on TV?

We realize... my job is really to get the photographers in, so, we can over to [Shows] in case of other media coverage. Celebrities are usually very discreet when they come in the shows during fashion week. They say yes to, but we can tell you a month—for fashion shows, if you need a celebrity, you need to hire a celebrity wrangler. You give them a budget, and they would give you a list of your good celebrities. Maybe you'd end up with, say, Lindsay Lohan or Mischa Barton, and maybe a less B-star. It fits the right into a budget for it, then we would hire them.

So how about shows like Mary Jo-sides?

Of course, those are designers who have a lot of friends. J Lo did his last campaign, so she was there, along with Usher. This year, Macy designers put the celebrities to all-stand, it's part of it. We once pay for them, at most they show wear. It's a big industry, but once you've got celebrity endorsement, your name gets branded.

What's your typical day like?

E-mails, phone calls to clients, fashion editors... press previews are coming up with spring 2007, so we have to prepare for that. We invite editors of both men's and women's magazines and they come as a one-time view—or give them a shot and see previews there. We represent three collections right now: it's for Spring 2007, they're not in the stores yet. We're working for Reuters, Marie Pitt which is an brand. Mexx, owned by Liz Claiborne. We have a few donations design on the Oslo, she's former Hunter Lee. She used to design for DKNY and she's a darling of the editors. It's really a variety of designers that we believe in. For celebrities, I did J Lo's show once and she's doing really well. He did Lisa by Gwen Stefani. I reckon it all fits right.

So would you say you're a bit jaded?

No, not at all! I love what I do! I just don't get overwhelmed anymore. We just did an event last night, with Global Invests, the Al Gore foundation that he represents. Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt, Bill Gates Jr. are big supporters of it because they're very environmentally conscious. We produced that event so we see the red fashion editors.

You don't get starstruck anymore?

Oh we [still] nod all those. Lizzie's still a star. She [was] there once the biggest daughter—they make fun of everyone! But celebrities are usually very nice; I haven't really handled someone who wasn't nice. Like Paris Hilton is very nice. But I'm not a celebrity stalker, I'm not. But if there are some celebrities that are... they normally go up to celebs and offer them free clothes and all. But I don't do that, that's not my style!

Advice you can give to aspiring fashionistas?

It's a lot of hard work. A lot of people think it's just all glamour and fun, but you have to be very organized, and be very nice. For a start up, you just need to get out there and network! It's all about moving your company, talking about your company, and being street smart. It's also about hard work and not have budgets. Get your clients. Publicize your company, not yourself.

Why is it not advisable to promote yourself?

Again, promote your company, not yourself. The more you're found a lot about those publicists who do that, but that's usually good, professional ones don't do that.

What difficulties do you find?

If you can't get enough fashion credits for your client. Even if you have positive meetings with editors, it means that the season is not that "strong." It's a big issue with the designers if you have your ups and big negatives like Cosmo or Marie Claire. Sometimes, even if the shutters were shot, the editorial gets scrapped, and we just have to tell our clients to come over.

What is the future of your company?

Exciting developments are moving on is representing restaurants, hotel-ier lines, and culture. It's about diversifying into more corporate clients. In the long run, we hope to have a fashion content where we can train and we can do more of mentoring the business. We only want to retain our boutique size because we deal with our clients directly, not like the big PR companies who usually assign junior publicists to handle them.

I think Vinoya can be good at PR because we're known to be charming (and yet not afraid) to get our hands dirty.

Ha! Oh I've paid my dues. Been part 16 years! I was an intern, used to fetch coffee, make photocopies, I was ready to give up at one point. But because I just love what I do so I stayed on, and you'll see my personality here many People are in the fashion world!

Parting words for all the global Pinoys?

If you don't invest in anything, there's no return! If any Filipino wants to get in to fashion, if they're hungry for it and it's in their blood, they work—it's about hard work and talent.

E-mail the author at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

Jenni Epperson

The marry-est month

DECEMBER, RATHER THAN JUNE, is the month when the most number of brides walk down the aisle to say "I do." The June bride actually originated here in cold days in the West when folks would get married right after spring and they usually had the sunshine, so it's still there. But December is the merriest month.

Add glitter to the glittering month of December

THE GLAMOUR and opulence of the Victorian era is brought back to life through this vintage-inspired collection of tiaras and earrings. P13,200. Queen by Portia Ahead.

THE CHARM of pearl flowers is revitalized in this necklace and bracelet set rich in matching earrings. P6,200. Queen by Portia Ahead.

INSPIRED by nature, this intricate choker with gold leaf design is perfect for garden weddings. Choker: P6,950; drop earrings: P750. Queen by Bric-a-brac Sunset.

Being caught up in all the wedding and holiday frenzy can surely be stressful for any bride-to-be (and everyone involved in the preparations, for that matter). And given that all brides want to look their best on their wedding day, one way to stand out and look stunning is by choosing the right jewelry to match the perfect wedding gown. Brides can search and shine brighter with the right pieces to match their silver gleam.

This is precisely why Shoreworks, the country's leading retailer for sterling silver fashion accessories, has come up with many of these very pieces that are set off any outfit. These timeless pieces are perfect for the bride-to-be, evenings and others joining the celebration.

Shoreworks' jewelry pieces range from intricately-designed chokers to more contemporary multi-tiered necklaces with pearls and precious stones, to Queen's wedding available for everyone.

Portia Zamora, a Shoreworks bride herself, endorses glamour and elegance and shows all and namely how to sparkle and shine during the many an event such as one's wedding day. Add

Photography Pat Dy
Styling Maureen Shuiz
Model Portia Zamora
Makeup Gaia Laurel Lorenzo
Hair Chris Calapid Bianca Inso-Lim
Jewelry Shoreworks

Lounging in style

On Kim: Corduroy riffle-neck shirt by and denim skirt with thick belt, Liz Claiborne gold necklace on Max: Jessica cream silk chiffon top, Liz Claiborne silk chiffon leopard-print skirt, on Aaron: MEXX navy collared shirt and grey knit shirt, DK Jeans denim pants; on Marcus: MEXX black and white-striped wrap top, Laundry check shirt 70 pants; on Daryl: MEXX brown long sleeved shirt with red stripes and chocolate brown pants

Holiday sparkle

STORES SPECIALISTS INC., the exclusive distributor of some of the best, fashion forward names in international fashion, offers stylish options to help us shine during the holidays.

Check out Anne Klein's bronze silk satin halter dress with beads, which you can prep up with Liz Claiborne's patent interior bag with a chain gold chain strap. Or why not go for a Christmas red jersey dress from Laundry!

Basic tools or requisite black are excellent options, too. Ask' remember to choose statement pieces with head-turning details like Jessica's silk chiffon Victorian top with flower appliqués or Lubel's ladylike knee-length skirt trimmed with ruffles. You can't go wrong with a black mini too. Laundry has one that is just tomboy-y enough and which can be easily paired with a wide obi-style belt from DK.

You can also go for splashes of vibrant colors! Opt for a printed chiffon empire-cut dress with a red ribbon on the waist. Or be the toast of the party in a flapper-inspired colorful-clad fun empire-waist Laundry.

For those casual get-togethers, a DK Jeans miniskirt can be matched with a fully sequined silver spaghetti-strap top (especially when you have a rabbit fur scarf tied around your neck!). A very casual three navy polo shirt underneath an Ivy's black nylon suit jacket is a great study in contrasts, too.

And for your man, a slim black tie with his A/X slip black long-sleeve shirt provides a touch of evening glamour to his washed denim pants. No dressier events, a rich-color, richly cut tee with a stylish dress tie like black velvet A/X jacket...is the perfect option.

With the right attitude, not to mention the right outfit, you can easily hop from one fun to another, ensure that everyone's content and everyone's glad that you have arrived—and here! ALI

Dancing the night away

Sweetest Goodbye

On Rhina: Anne Klein bronze silk satin halter dress, Liz Claiborne interior bag with gold chain strap, gold-tone worn as choker and gold necklace with tassel pendant; on Daryl: A/X black velvet suit jacket, MEXX navy polo shirt, DK army green shirt

Innocent Flirtations

On Aaron: A/X ribbed black shirt, gray denim pants and gray knit scarf; on Max: Laundry red jersey halter dress, Liz Claiborne red and gold necklace and gold bangles worn at left

Photography by Ace Delgado
Styling Charmaine Palermo
Makeup Artistic Peace • Hair Felicity Sio
Clothes and accessories
A/X, Anne Klein, DK, Jeans, Jessica, Laundry, Liz Claiborne, Mexx,
Models Kim, Rhina and Daryl; Look Models, Aaron; Max's Division Talents & Models' Management; and Max: Absolutely Models
Shot on location at Pamana
Wines Gran Tibio

The Glitz Club

Cover-up/jacket on Daryl: A/X black velvet suit jacket, white long-sleeve with black stripes, tee/undie, stand belt and denim pants; sunglasses: A/X black suit jacket, long sleeves, black pants and black belt; on Mina: Laundry printed chiffon empire dress with red ribbon, Jessica black necklace; on Kim: Laundry black silk chiffon dress, DK ribbon necklace with crystal stones, Anne Klein black and silver bracelet/watch; on Max: Jessica cream silk dress, Anne Klein chocolate brown knee socks

On Kim: Oil black rabbit fur and sequined shrug top, DK Jeans denim miniskirt, Anne Klein silver charm necklace and black chandelier earrings, Liz black knit coat; on Aaron: DK white shirt, DK Jeans green jacket and denim pants; on Daryl: A/X black turtleneck, denim pants and gray knit shirt, DK orange shirt with buttons; on Max: Jessica deep green silk top with lace details, DK Jeans denim pants with crystal studs, Anne Klein gold and black bangle, Liz Claiborne ivory and silver drop earrings and necklace

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Smart: Text **RING ADD 106870** and send to 288

MOTOROLA 12 GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

Robinsons Department Store

Holiday Gift List

ENTERTAINMENT

Angelina Jolie opens up for the first time

Answers all questions on Brad, raising and adopting kids

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

Melvin V. Negrales

LOS ANGELES—"NO COMment" or "I will not answer that" never flowed from the luscious lips of Angelina Jolie when the media members armed by her relationship with Brad Pitt, on large reporting her recent "Sorry, that's too personal," but the actress answered all questions. She was very straightforward...no hesitation whatsoever.

Her press is that since Angelina decided to be interviewed again after almost two years, she girded herself to face the queries and reply in them candidly and spontaneously. She was unflappable in the exchange held at a

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4 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
5 TENACIOUS D
6 SPIRIT TRAP
7 THE NATIVITY STORY
8 REYNA
9 BORAT A GOOD YEAR
10 KAMA SUTRA 3

ERMITA

1 SPIRIT TRAP
2 REYNA THE NATIVITY STORY
3 CASINO ROYALE
4 KAMA SUTRA 3
5 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
6 HAPPY FEET
7 TENACIOUS D

METRO EAST

1 REYNA
2 HAPPY FEET
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 THE NATIVITY STORY
5 TENACIOUS D
6 SPIRIT TRAP
7 CASINO ROYALE
8 WANG YAN

NOVALICHES

1 CASINO ROYALE
2 HAPPY FEET
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 REYNA

CITISQUARE MALABON | PIONEER

1 ANG PAMANA THE INHERITANCE
2 REYNA
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE
1 TENACIOUS D
2 HAPPY FEET
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 SPIRIT TRAP

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1 FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS
2 SAINTS CLAUSE 3
3 MY FIRST WEDDING
4 DECK THE HALLS
1 HAPPY FEET
2 THE RETURN
3 MY FIRST WEDDING
4 STEP UP

DASMARINAS | ANGELES

1 FEAST
2 ANG PAMANA THE INHERITANCE
3 A GOOD YEAR
4 HAPPY FEET
1 THE MARINE
2 Zu WARRIORS
3 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
4 MEE-SHEE

IMUS | STARMILLS

1 THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
2 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
3 FEAST
4 REYNA
1 HAPPY FEET
2 MEE-SHEE
3 REYNA
4 THE RETURN
5 FRAGILE
6 THE MARINE

BACOLOD | ILOILO

1 FRAGILE
2 MEE-SHEE
3 THE NATIVITY STORY
4 CASINO ROYALE
5 BARNYARD
6 HAPPY FEET
1 FRAGILE
2 THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
3 HAPPY FEET
4 REYNA

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Angelina

Bystanders hid

Bob stunts lured cross-eyed

appeared by the window [illegible]

The guys pounded to [illegible]

even though there was a [illegible]

the window. Angelina stop

turned for her forty-[illegible]

sprawling to questions.

Hotel guards soon reunite

were able to bring down a d

blocked the view of the pa

time we experienced such

particular hotel room. Ho

usually don't notice ongoing

bad, occasionally a pistol

ghosts at the room and we c

reporters. That person, m

aside invariably accompan

celebrity) and grab for a fe

us. Or a policeman would c

then take a few steps back

does walk away from.

But Angelina is such

days—hence, the sudden in

photographers. We're glad th

fancy media sizzling since

Brad, she is—now that she h

the paces again—still is kind

as ever. For her last number

days on The Introverted

greatest quality. There's a sens

her—a hint of daring, though

lurking beneath that gorgeou

Most beautiful

People often ask me who

actors I have interviewed. I

golfer Jobe. With her beau

pensive for his chosen vehi

especially children, and that

her, who can blame Brad Pi

her?

We hope, though, that A

more upright. At this point, I

guest. But the fact in her ca

Specters still very much in ev

The film that made her c

press again is "The Good Sh

Structured job of the CIA's

Sullivan. Angelina used prop

Bob's, Matt Damon starts as

a member of the secret Skull

(US President George W. Bu

Joe George Bush, both Yal

hired and becomes a pivotal

demise of the Central Intellig

Angelina, blonde in this

wife of Matt Damon's intelli

in her marriage to a man w

sworn to secrecy. She and M

age from young college s

drain to parents in the Sta

are to be "husband and wife."

Richard Holbrooke, wh

Filipinos remember as the

diplomat Secretary of State

East Asia and Pacific Affa

during the People Power Re

before to be Philippine Ambas

quoted in the film's producer

unite to unite], "The G

Shepherd is a fictionalized v

most of them which it seems

is almost every faction."

Robert De Niro himself

praise for the movie, along wit

supporting cast that include

Alec Baldwin, William Hu

Timothy Hutton, Jo

Cushing, Michael Gambo

Joe Pesci and John Turturro.

Fulfilling period

While a colleague of m

prefixed his question by say

Angelina said, "He haven't

was in a couple of years. A

the blinds going on?" she jo

back, "Because I'm [illegible]

the whole world knows that

last two years have been tra

times, but fulfilling, period

Angelina's life. She and B

adopted an Ethiopian b

named Zahara Marley Jo

Brad's grandfather's

husband has also legally ad

of Cambodian Maddox, bo

called by daughter-in-law "Mad

adopt this boy adoption] [illegible]

It is said that the [illegible]

ties that attracted Brad to

golina is his passion to mov

assurances of said and he w

time torn by conflicts, dis

and other problems. This de

action to help the less fortu

repeatedly mentioned in her

her mother, French act

Marcheline Bertrand [illegible]

battling cancer, led to Ang

act's appointment as the Un

will Ambassador for the Un

Nations High Commissioner

Refugees.

The US volunteer work

her film projects (she recen

shot a movie on-data [illegible]

Jacket-Brad in jacket-[illegible]

golina cared often as it is

by her own), the duo likes to

her timid plans. She has also

both UK and US pilot lesse

the latter one was [illegible]

go, she told us).

At the press con, Angel

crossing a major milestone

ten clipped her hands [illegible]

steps much by her long, s

fingers, put her inner-w

table and leaned forward on

Jolie opens up for the first time

Bridal questions

We haven't talked to you in almost two years. Can you recap the high points in your personal journey to the last couple of years?

The high points are the obvious. My coming together with Brad, Brad and Maddox coming together, and Zahara coming into our family. The low or scarier point was when Liberia got sick. Her severe lung that was a high point. My having a baby [Shiloh] and now her personality is coming out—it's fun. It's great to see all these kids together.

On a professional level, this film was wonderful to work on. That I'll be working a lot less and spending a lot more time at home sets a welcome decision at the end of the day.

ANGELINA JO

Angelina Jolie opens up for the first time

Newspage 02

And you have been going on those missions for the UN.

I've been working for the UN for five years now. I have been involved with projects in Cambodia for four years. I'm still pushing for different bills in Washington and they haven't gone through. We have a new Congress. Maybe they will. Umm (some bills).

I'm trying to educate myself more to be able to handle discussions on issues better and not just be emotional about them. I would try to actually deal with them on a stronger level and make some changes.

As I'm looking at you from the side, you and Brad could be brother and sister.

Well, thank God we're not (laughter).

Even in your voice and the way you respond to questions.

Oh, no. Really?

So you think your relationship is based on the fact that you are alike?

We know, it's funny. When we first came together, everybody commented on how different we were. So now it's funny to hear somebody comment on how similar we are. (To my Dad,) I think you've scared me into thinking we're starting to be that couple that morphs (starts looking like each other). We are very different in many ways—certainly in the way he is at home and the way I am at home. But we balance each other quite well.

Can you give an example of how different you are?

He's very methodical and takes time with things. I'm very impulsive like on a decision we made yesterday. But (when we travel), he packs at the last minute while I pack three days ahead with all the kids' stuff and five different things. I like to organize each moment of our travel but he likes to be more spontaneous. But we appreciate each other. We need it. I need us to not so crazy about things.

(More on Sunday)

E-mail the columnist at reyesbo_3569@yahoo.com

Metro Manila Film Festival

Inquirer Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema date. The MMFF runs from Dec. 25 to Jan. 7. —EDS.

Super Noypi

Stars: John Prats, Jennifer Wuicado, Mark Herras, Karenn Hefti, Pete Ramos, Sandwin Poh, Andrew Muhlach, Aubrey Miles, Monemar del Rosario

Directed by Quark Henares

"Spy Kid" meet "The Incredibles." After their parents are taken hostage by an evil warlord, six suburban kids learn that their moms and dads are super heroes and that they have all inherited super-human powers. Regal hopes this movie will jump-start a new action-adventure franchise for the annual film festival. The film boasts over 150 special effects.

Tatlong Baraha

Stars: Lito Lapid, Mark Lapid, Maynard Lapid, Phenomelo Marcelo, Jackie Rice, Rowena Moiy, Eleanore del Rosario

Directed by Toto Natividad

During the Spanish period, three ordinary citizens were bestowed with special powers so they could defend their countrymen from ruthless Spaniards. But instead of the promised three (3) pandesal, also called 'tatlong baraha,' they are still saving schoolkids from kidnappers, zombies and gun-toting clowns. The heroes—Lenis Universo, Julio Valiente and Zigfreno—are based on characters popularized by Sen. Lito Lapid in the past.

Editor Bonnie S. Velarde

LIVING Stars

Jamie's joys

By Rayani San Diego Jr.

A VECTOR EXCLAIMS, "THIS looks like a hovel!" And singer Jamie Rivera demurs, "Welcome to my humble home."

There is, indeed, a feel of modesty about the interior, though the house is clothed with holiday decor.

Jamie subscribes to minimalism, "Simple," she says, "than the design is in the details, like the balustrades and the hovel/pilaya doors."

HOME BODY

JAMIE whips up Japanese specialties on the upper table and has become more health-conscious these days.

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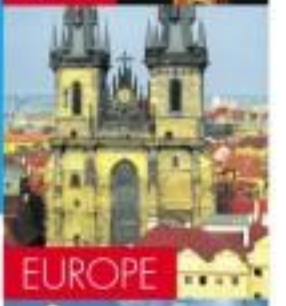
CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD



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WEEKLONG BARGAINS • DECEMBER 26 TO JANUARY 1

H'wood's best & worst celeb dog owners

NEW YORK—Would it? COMES TO celebrity dog-pampering skills, Oprah Winfrey is tops and Britney Spears is the world's worst, according to an online vote by readers of two dog magazines.

"Britney was the most shocking choice" for worst celebrity dog owner for 2006, Hilary D'Aagosa, editor of The new York Dog and The Bollywood Dog magazines, said in a statement.

"She once had three Chihuahuas... and never left home without at least one of them," D'Aagosa said. "As soon as she sees it, fed and had kids duty [the dogs] disappeared."

Spears has filed for divorce from rapper-turned-actor Kevin Federline. The 25-year-old pop singer and Federline, 28, have a 1-year-old son, Sean Preston, and a 5-month-old son, Jayden James.

Paris Hilton, 2005's "worst" winner, placed second for "treating her dogs like accessories," the magazines said.

Whitney, who owns five dogs, was voted this year's best celebrity dog owner. She replaced 2005 winner Jessica Simpson, and beat Tori Spelling, Brooklyn Decker and Ivana Trump. Coming forward to Bush's gathering.

Voting took place online over a three-month period. Besides awarding scientifically representative of the magazines' readers, and the total number of votes won't be released, D'Aagosa said. AP

TAE TALES

Oldemark, Ate Carnalgan, Lali Socorro, Jolly Aviesa, Eddie Romero and wife Carolina, Christine Dayrit and cancer Michelle Dayrit-Gokiem

ANNE CURTIS

PHOEBE LA BRANDA

JOJO ALONSO

FAITH CURETA

KELLY Osbourne displays some of her tattoos at the world premiere of "It's a Boyfie Thing" in London.

MICKEY and Jan Rooney also at "Phoenix" premiere in New York.

Sparkling gems, bright stars, one lovely evening

Christine Dayrit, head of the Cinema Evaluation Board, twirls with from the movie industry to launch her family's Whisky goods at The Black in EM North Edsa. Among the guests were Quezon City Mayor Sabiano Belmonte Jr., Ric Carvalgan of EM' walls, Jolly Aviesa of the Film Development Council of the Philippines, National Artist for Film Eddie Romero, lawyer Joji Alonso, actresses Phoemela Baranda and Anne Curtis, and filmmaker Oscar Mondoza.

PARTY! PARTY!

HUSBAND and ex Ben Affleck and Christine Taylor arrive at the New York premiere of "Night at the Museum."

STING and wife Trudi, also at the "Boy Girl Thing" premiere London.

RUFA MAE QUINTO

My bedroom is very Japanese, very Zen. It's relaxing and comfortable. I also like the dressing room, designed by Carrie Martin, which is all white. White looks cool and refreshing. Other interior on the dining room and bedroom. I plan for a natural and refreshed every time I look at the pool.

Reported Tina Arceo Jr.

TESSIE TOMAS

I AM INTO SPIRITUAL AND SELF-HELP books. My favorites are Gary Zukav's "The Seat of the Soul" and Thomas Moore's "Soulmates." I often buy inspiring novels like Mitch Albom's "Tuesdays with Morrie," Lee Christmas, my boyhood favorite, or the biological Regis Pallbo-gifted one with Amy Tan's novel, "Joy Luck Club." Growing Up Brave, Growing Wi

about a group of friends who encounter all sorts of problems while on a holiday celebration.

Books

Ok, a recent trip to London, I bought Roger Lewis' "The Life and Death of Peter Sellers," which was turned into an HBO film. I find the writer's life interesting.

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Jamie's joys

The wooden floor has intricate embellishments made of nara and mahogany slivers.

Jamie's family moved in seven years ago, but the house still has a "new-new" to it. That's because they divide their time between this place and her in-laws' house nearby.

"We spend Christmas Eve with [in-laws] relatives, but the 25th is for my husband and daughter," she explains.

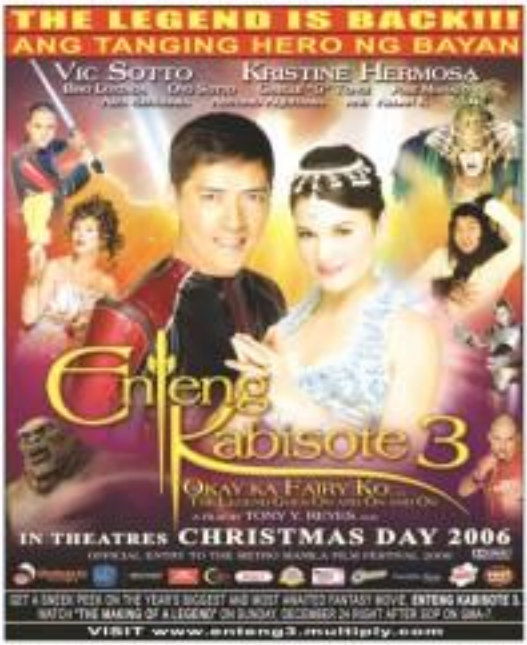
This new house is "party central," where they usually entertain guests.

It's apparent from the state-of-the-art kitchen that they take dining seriously. It has a regular table, where they whip up Japanese specialties.

For today lunch, Jamie is preparing a sumptuous but healthy repast—guacamole, burrata with chutney, herb tomato salad, beggars' chicken, Forbidden pudding and shiitake mushroom risotto.

There days, she's also busy with advocacy work—the SOS Children's Village and the scholarship program of her high school batch (1982) at the University of Santo Tomas. "We have a fund-raising concert for our scholars on Feb. 17 at the Manila Hotel."

"IT'S all in the details—like the grillwork on the balustrades," says the mistress of the house.



Red Carpet

'Black Christmas' premiere in H'wood

MARY ELIZABETH WINSTEAD

TAHANEO

New York premie

JULIANNE MOORE, at Cinema Society & SQ screening of "Children Of Men."

CATE Blanchett, at "Notes On A Scandal" screening.